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**I'M SURE WE'VE MET BEFORE**

**BY MAX MILLER**

THE LAND WHERE TIME STANDS STILL  
IT MUST BE THE CLIMATE  
RENO  
HARBOR OF THE SUN  
A STRANGER CAME TO PORT  
MEXICO AROUND ME  
FOR THE SAKE OF SHADOWS  
FOG AND MEN ON BERING SEA  
THE GREAT TREK  
THE MAN ON THE BARGE  
THE SECOND HOUSE FROM THE CORNER  
THE BEGINNING OF A MORTAL  
HE WENT AWAY FOR A WHILE  
I COVER THE WATERFRONT  
DAYBREAK FOR OUR CARRIER  
THE FAR SHORE  
IT'S TOMORROW OUT HERE  
THE LULL  
THE TOWN WITH THE FUNNY NAME  
NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS  
I'M SURE WE'VE MET BEFORE

**Max Miller**

**LIEUTENANT COMMANDER  
U. S. N.**

**I'M SURE  
WE'VE MET  
BEFORE**

**WITH A "NOW HEAR THIS" BY  
CAPTAIN WALTER KARIG, U. S. N.**

**WITH FORTY-FOUR PHOTOGRAPHS**

**NEW YORK**

**E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY, INC.**

**1951**

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F I R S T   E D I T I O N

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**TO**

**AL MOREHOUSE**

*and his family who,  
not being baffled by the Far East,  
helped all of us so much*





## Now Hear This

WHEN THE UNITED NATIONS DECIDED TO RESIST THE Communist invasion of the Korean Republic, and United States forces were ordered into the action, our Navy had in contiguous waters no carrier, no battleship, no heavy cruiser—and no Max Miller.

Many of the ships now with the fleet in the Yellow Sea and the Sea of Japan were then in reserve. So was Max Miller. It took weeks to reactivate the ships. In twenty-four hours Max was ready for his third war. He wasn't in mothballs, even if his uniforms were: and incidentally they did not have to be let out at the seams. Max had just returned from an adventurous trip through Baja California and was writing a book about his adventures, whose place this volume takes.

In his own profession of letters, Max Miller is a four-star Admiral. Men who were lieutenant commanders with him in the Pacific naval campaigns of 1944 and 1945 now have stars on their shoulders, but at this writing Max still bears the two and a half stripes he wore into a dozen sea and air battles seven years ago. This wouldn't be worth comment, except the Navy didn't send Max to be shot at, all over again, as a fighting man.

With the candor of ancient friendship, I dare to say Max wouldn't be very good as the lieutenant commander skipper of a DE, let alone an Admiral in charge of a task force; but I dare also to say he'd do as well at it as most admirals would be at writing good books, and this, the first book on the Korean conflict, is very good.

So, might I add with equal objectivity, has been the record of the Navy in this war.

Eight months before the Navy (and the Marines) went into action against the Communist invaders of the Korean Republic they had barely survived a war of words at home in which the undemonstrable charges were made that warships were obsolete, carriers were a wasteful extravagance, and the Marines served no practicable function except to look fancy standing guard outside Embassies. Since June, 1950, carriers have hauled shiploads of airplanes from San Diego to Japan to replenish the Air Force; carrier-borne naval and Marine aviation has penetrated where land-based aircraft could not effectively reach; cruisers and the only battleship afloat have broken up mass attacks on our infantry, twenty miles inland, with their big guns; Navy ships and the Navy-directed Military Sea Transport have hauled all the implements of warfare, from heavy tanks to blood plasma and big guns to canned beer, to all our armed forces and those of a dozen Allies beside. In the process, the Navy has had intimate experience with the Army and the Air Force in action. The happy consequence, maybe

the only happy consequence of the war so far, is the confraternity of soldier, sailor, airman and Marine which no legislation and no policy directive from above could have consummated. Crowded into the narrow confines of the Korean theater, each of the military services had learned in the bitter school of survival the essential part that the others contribute to the welfare of the whole.

Very informally, very convincingly, Max Miller relates all this in terms of the informed eyewitness and participant. Some of the adventures set forth in this book we shared together, but I don't believe that it is wholly out of pleasure in reliving shared hours of peril and the pursuit of happiness that convinces me that this is a great book. Max has the gift of taking his readers along with him; he has always had that quality of identifying himself with his readers, and thereby making them participants in the outrageously uncommon experiences warfare brings to bewildered civilians in uniform. Many books will inevitably be written about the—Lord help us—"police action" in Korea, and most of them will be more learned than this one, but none will so intimately convey to you the sights and sounds, and the smell and the flavor, as that which you are about to read.

WALTER KARIG

*Captain, U.S.N.*

*Special Deputy Chief of Information*

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(All official U.S. Navy photographs.  
Most of these pictures were taken by  
the Navy Combat Photographic Unit  
under Commander Frederick Spencer,  
U.S.N.)

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**I ' M   S U R E   W E ' V E   M E T   B E F O R E**





## Chapter I

MAKALAPA IS MORE THAN A RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT FOR the Navy at Pearl Harbor. Makalapa is more like the game of musical chairs. The same brown-board bungalows remain where they always have remained, each on its respective hillside, but the occupants change. They are changing all the time.

The names usually are on boards stuck into the front lawns. Bill, whom we may have known as a commander in the other war, has become a captain now. And Gus has become a rear admiral. These brief biographies also are announced on the lawns.

Our station wagon, filled with the luggage and Navy personnel from the plane, was driven on the winding

road past some of these familiar houses on our way to the Bachelor Officers' quarters, better known of course as the B.O.Q., and still sometimes better known as Makalapa itself. Not that it makes much difference, for everybody knows what it is.

If we were wearing our blues, fresh from the States, we felt silly and hot. But there wasn't—and still isn't—anything to do about it until we reach the B.O.Q. and can change. Even if we were wearing our khaki jackets we felt silly. But there is nothing to do about that, either, until we can get a bath and put on clean shirts with ties. All Makalapa, as well as the rest of Pearl Harbor, still sticks to the wearing of black ties. But no jackets. That part of it has not changed from the other war.

Nor has the facial expression of Pearl Harbor itself changed much from the other war. Fewer vehicles is all, and obviously fewer vessels. For as soon as they arrive out of mothballs, the vessels are sent away to the Far East. But come to think of it, a lot of us in the station wagon were just out of mothballs, too, and on our way to the Far East.

Would the B.O.Q. of Makalapa still furnish towels and soap? "Yes," said the driver, "for this is not the Army."

Already I realized that my biggest difficulty after all these years, and getting back into Navy harness, was to forget there is an English language and to try to learn to talk with numerals and letters instead. This was indi-



South Korean Commandos stranded on an enemy beach north of Pohang waving for help to the U.S.S. *Helena's* helicopter.



Liberty in Sasebo, Japan.

cated but a few days previously with my own telegraphed orders from Washington:

BWD 823 WP C193 BEP A127 . . . FORM ABLE BUPERS  
CL 106 42 XLCDR MAX C. MILLER 191688/1105 . . . PROPEP  
COMTWELVE TRANSPORTATION PORICH CINCPACFLET  
ARREP. . . .

And a lot more of the same. A hell of a lot more of the same. Personally I would have preferred some personal touch in such a telegram, so abruptly changing my life.

Although I hardly expected that the telegram, in all its code, may have included (without me being aware of it) a telegraphed corsage as a going-away present, nevertheless the telegram at least could have concluded with the customary LOVE—which would have cost nothing more. Instead the conclusion was 95290 BEPH.

So, I still don't know whether to thank Dear BEPH for having so thoughtfully telegraphed me, or whether BEPH is a first name or a last, or just some secret word of endearment supposedly known only between us two.

"Here's the B.O.Q. of Makalapa—where all of you get out," the driver said. And I felt like whispering, "And get out PDQ." For I was trying my best to work into the numerical mood, if even a little gradually.

What I always have observed about the Navy on islands, and whether in lean years of political poverty or brighter ones of applause, is that the Navy looks out for its people first, whether for bedding or food, and asks the

questions, if any, later. Maybe this is just one of the small reasons so many of us answer the fire alarm when the Navy calls for help—at distant lands. We know that with the Navy, no matter how far away, we at least will be with our own people.

The room assigned me was 302, and yes, there was a towel and soap.

I was to report to Comdr. Harry Cross, whom I did not know except by name and reputation. Would he be stern and look me over for flaws, as for instance if my insignia might be pinned on my collar upside down. For I had gotten out of practice with those things. Would he say: "You're an hour late reporting, damn it. For we knew when the plane landed." Would he say: "You've got cigarette ashes on your tie, and take your hands out of your pockets." Would he say—

Well, it was still early morning at Makalapa, but rather late and hungry for me, as time had gone back several hours since leaving San Francisco. I asked at the desk where his home was, and walked to it.

A sign on the lawn declared his name beneath a sprinkling hose, but did not say anything about "welcome." But I walked down the wet steps anyhow, and knocked at the door, and he answered in his bathrobe.

"Come in, come in," he said. "You're just in time for breakfast. God, I feel rotten."

So, yes, I was back at Makalapa. So, yes, I was back in the Navy.

## Chapter 2

THE ONE EMBARRASSMENT IN RETURNING TO ACTIVE DUTY in the Navy, after all this lapse of years, is that one's hair has changed a little more gray, and one's uniforms seem to have changed a little too from lack of use, but one's insignia have not changed at all. I was still wearing the gold leaves of six or seven years ago.

The fault undoubtedly was my own as I could not keep up with the intricacies of paper work, even when as an "inactive active reserve on the inactive active list"—for there is some such a clause meaning just that, although I may not be wording it quite rightly.

And then, too, there's an Act of Congress prohibiting spot promotions in the Navy. It's against the law of our land. So if I was stuck with the same old gold leaves of a previous war, so were my Navy friends in turn stuck with the embarrassing sight of me. Nobody especially likes to be seen in the company of somebody who undoubtedly must be the idiot of the family.

Youngsters who had stayed with the Navy were now full commanders or more. They deserved to be, considering the tribulations of knowing what papers to sign, and what time throughout the year to sign, and, by God, demanding that the papers be sent to be signed if they already had not been sent to be signed.

It's somewhat of a profession in itself, this signing business, but meanwhile I had had my own living to make. Nor how was I to know that, after having been in two wars already, there would be still a third one coming up in my time.

Many personal sketches have been written about Adm. Arthur W. Radford, Pacific Fleet commander in chief, and under whom I was to serve and get my further orders for the Far East. As I had known him more or less from away back when he was a Navy lieutenant flying on North Island, I naturally wondered what would be his reaction now when this gray-haired lieutenant commander walked into his office to report. At least I was not doing it in a wheel chair, but other than that—

Here's what Admiral Radford did: he arose from his desk, put out his hand and said: "Hello, Max." And after that I knew everything would be all right. Let strange officers, if they like, stare at my gray hair, then at my leaves, then back at my hair, then at my leaves again, but now I knew everything was all right, and that we immediately could get to work.

Comdr. Harry Cross was with me while I reported,



and after we left the headquarters office he told me something which I consider rather important about the commander in chief of the Pacific Fleet. Harry's tiny son Billy, it seems, had taken it upon himself one evening to call at the Makalapa home of Admiral Radford.

"I'm Billy Cross and a neighbor boy told me you're the the most important man around here. Are you?"

"Come in, Billy," said Admiral Radford, opening the screen door. "Is there anything I can get you?"

"Yes, a cooky."

So together, Admiral Radford and Billy went out into the kitchen and looked for cookies, found some, and continued talking.

Afterwards, when Billy was back home and Mrs. Cross heard what had occurred, she was what in the most sublimest of terms could be described as horrified. Not only did she lecture Billy, but she did other things to Billy, to impress on him his great breach of Navy etiquette. And to further impress him she lied a little and said: "Why, Daddy could be punished for what you've done—if you ever do it again—why—why—why—"

And while she was trying to get her breath for more adjectives, Billy looked up at her and said: "Could he be punished, Mamma? And does Admiral Radford spank very hard? Would he spank Daddy very hard?"

## Chapter 3

NOBODY LIKES TO CLAIM HE HAS READ EVERYTHING, BUT I do believe there are thousands of us by now who have memorized to heart all the literature ever printed on the inside hull of a bucket-seat plane.

For there is not much else to do—except to reread and then reread these signs—after leaving Hawaii to cross the rest of the distance to Japan.

The magazines we were going to take with us we did not take. They either were left at the airport during the confusion of weighing or else they were stuck in the bag which now was stowed and lashed beyond sight and reach in the nose of the ship. A sailor, in the bucket seat five seats to the right, had a mangled copy of *Western Stories*, but he did not seem to want to relinquish it.

So our choice of literature once again became the signs in small letters directly opposite us: "Cargo Section F. Max. 800 Lbs." Yes, my own name seems printed everywhere, which is good. For there also is a "Cargo Section R. Max. 800 Lbs." and all along the line like that, people personally talking to me in print everywhere.

And next to the side hatch, now closed of course, is dramatical literature at its utmost: "Caution: Watch Hands." We can remember this one easily because of its sheer Biblical simplicity, and so do not have to reread it again too many times. But next to the same hatch is another sign not quite so Biblical in its phraseology: "Do Not Open While Engines Are Turning."

All right, so we'll not open hatch while engines are turning, nor did we have any intentions of doing so, although the sign rather does give one an idea for how to break the monotony.

But the real literature is designed in the finest print of all, and requires close-up workmanship to make out, for a sailor's head—he's sleeping in the bucket seat opposite—keeps blurring part of the sign. Though I know he doesn't like to be stared at, even in his sleep, nevertheless each bob of his head reveals a little more of the completed sentence, although not quite all of it. By the time this duration flight is over, though, I may have it all. But up till now I have gotten as far as: "Litters Should Not Be Placed In This Tier Unless Capacity . . ."

We cannot see the ocean below because of an over-

cast, but there would be nothing to see down there anyhow except gallons of ridiculous water. Yet I have been over much of this same flight so many times during the previous war that I can call off the landing islands as if I were an elevator operator: Johnson—Kwajalein—Guam—

Johnson, second floor: ladies-ready-to-wear department and toilet accessories. Kwajalein, third floor: raincoats, upholstery, children's toys. Guam, third floor: lampshades, ladies' undergarments, trusses. But exactly after that, as an elevator operator, I will not know. For in the old days we used to branch out from Guam in all directions, sometimes going north to Tinian, Saipan, Iwo Jima, and sometimes going south for our task-force make-up in the atoll of Ulithi.

And thinking of the atoll islands of Ulithi, I wonder how the little old coral island of Mog Mog is doing down there these days. This diminutive island of Mog Mog, as flat in spirit as it was in shape, had been reserved for what was called fleet recreation. This meant that Navy personnel, some of whom had not been off the decks of their vessels for months and months, could now take turns going ashore on Mog Mog while another task force was making up.

The men and officers could go ashore in relays for a certain number of hours and raise complete hell doing nothing. Mog Mog, being without women or natives, was as pure as the whiteness of its coral. By tossing a soggy

football around in the perpetual rainstorms we could recreate but not propagate, and that had been our memories of Mog Mog.

Honolulu, though, had been a lot better this time than during the previous war. The women there no longer behaved to the Navy like God A'mighty on a cloud. In regard to them, the phrase during the previous war had been: "So few for so many for so little." But now quite a few of them in Honolulu had seemed anxiously happy to accept dates and drinks. And, of course, there no longer was that damned curfew.

Nor the barbed-wire barricades on the Beach of Waikiki.

There had been the hasty problem of what to pack and not pack for Japan and Korea. Nobody ever seems to know ahead of time exactly about these things. For the vanguard of what little had been left of the Navy had gone there ahead and was still there. Are khakis worn in Japan? Yes, absolutely. Are blues worn in Japan? Yes, absolutely. Well, what should I take, then, and still keep under the baggage limit?

"We don't know, but we'll help you pack."

This was Lieut. Comdr. Tom Quillman talking. I had not seen him since the previous war when he was a lieutenant fresh in. He had stayed with the Navy, and so knows all about how to interpret numerals and codes and official messages. He was surprised, perhaps even a little happy, that the only thing I distinctly could remember

was ETA—expected time of arrival. I had hinted to him that it be sent on ahead to Tokyo so that all Korea in time would know I was coming and perhaps begin to tremble.

But instead of accepting the hint, Tom said he would help me pack. This was done by emptying my flight bag and filling it again with the same things we had emptied.

Tom and Comdr. Cross and Mrs. Cross had seen Comdr. Fred Spencer and me off from Barber's Point. This was their own mistake—but ah, as for Barber's Point, it was at a picnic grounds near here during the other war where the chiefs from our carrier the *Yorktown* had prepared ahead for a long time to hold a picnic, a big one, in celebration of returning from a long operation into enemy waters.

But Honolulu, still being what it was during that war, the picnic consisted mainly of the chiefs staring at each other's long-familiar faces, and of course with no female hands to help with the sandwiches and beer.

What the chiefs finally did, though, was quite logical for their own state of mind, and after having seen each other for so long and on such lengthy voyages. What they did was to begin throwing each other into the melted ice in the big trough containing the beer. They threw and threw, with all their uniforms still on, and that was the highlight of the womanless picnic.

Nobody should ever see anybody off anywhere, especially at an airport. Fred and I felt sorry for Tom and

Comdr. Cross and for his wife whom he calls "Button-nose." But all we could do about it was feel sad. It was not our fault that the plane we were going in, and had our gear loaded in, was not the plane we were to go in, after all. Something had occurred, and the Navy was as short of planes as of everything else.

"Go home," I commanded my superior officer Comdr. Cross. "Go home, I say." But I seem to lack the touch of leadership. They stayed and waited.

In the old days when people went to war they used to get on a horse and go to war. But airports have changed all that. The way we go to war now is to sit for hours with our luggage on a bench and watch the door of the latrine opposite us swing open and shut. The other amusement is going to the drinking fountain.

The one advantage, however, of departing by plane—when one finally does depart—is that the loyal people who have waited so long to see you off do not feel obliged to run alongside the plane, as with a train, tapping at the windows. There's a law against doing that, including the prop-wash.

But poor "Button-nose"—still waiting there, the epitome of what Navy wives have to do these days when their husbands decide to take care of the incoming and outgoing trade. Back at her home by now the potatoes may have boiled dry. And her children by now, with a pair of scissors, may have made little curtains out of big ones in the living room. But still she waited. We talked

about children in general, I astounded her with the observation that first they are babies and then they grow up.

Another plane in time finally took Fred and me off the ground. We were gone an hour or so over the Pacific, and then we returned. A leak somewhere in the fuel tank.

"Will we phone Harry and Button-nose that we're back?" Fred asked.

My answer was "No," for the intelligence might seep through to Korea and give comfort to the enemy.

Fred said: "But we'll have about another two hours to wait." And it must have been during this interval someplace where I mislaid my magazines.



## Chapter 4

AFTER FLYING OUR DAYS AND NIGHTS ACROSS THE WORLD'S largest ocean we finally landed at the airport of Haneda, outside of Tokyo, and were greeted by gaping throngs of more blank forms to sign.

Somewhere in this world there must be a massive building called The Temple of Signatures, and everything we sign must undoubtedly be kept there. Just kept there, is all, and perhaps for the sake of anthropologists a million years from now.

Show me a piece of paper and say "Sign it," and I'll sign it. I'll sign anything and say anything, for the Army has made a liar out of me. And Tokyo today is an Army-run city.

I have tried to be an honest man, at least when honesty was convenient. But in Tokyo honesty is not always convenient, especially when one arrives by plane in the evening during a dark rainstorm, and when no friends are waiting at the airport to help.

I was not alone. For Comdr. Fred Spencer had arrived in the same plane with me along with his combat camera

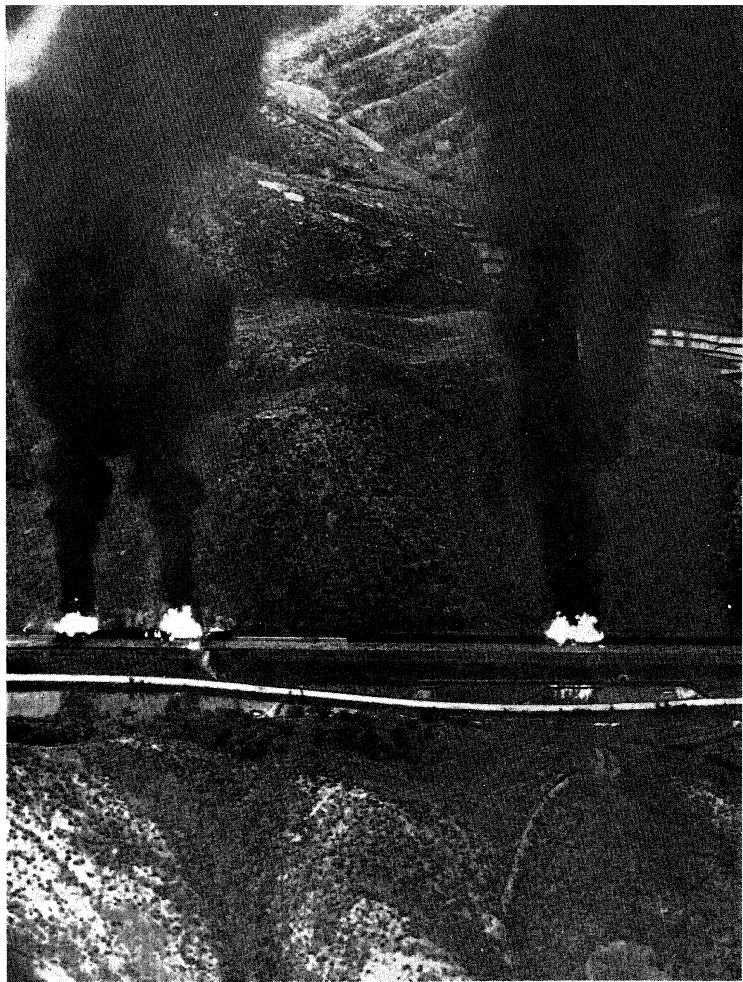
He said: "Well, we'll not walk."

I contemplated this remark for a considerable length of time and was comforted by it. But out where we were the Army owned what few jeeps there were. I perhaps could have concealed my Navy insignia and said I was a major. But I was not quite ready for dishonesty yet. That would come later, and when face to face in the Army billeting office in Tokyo.

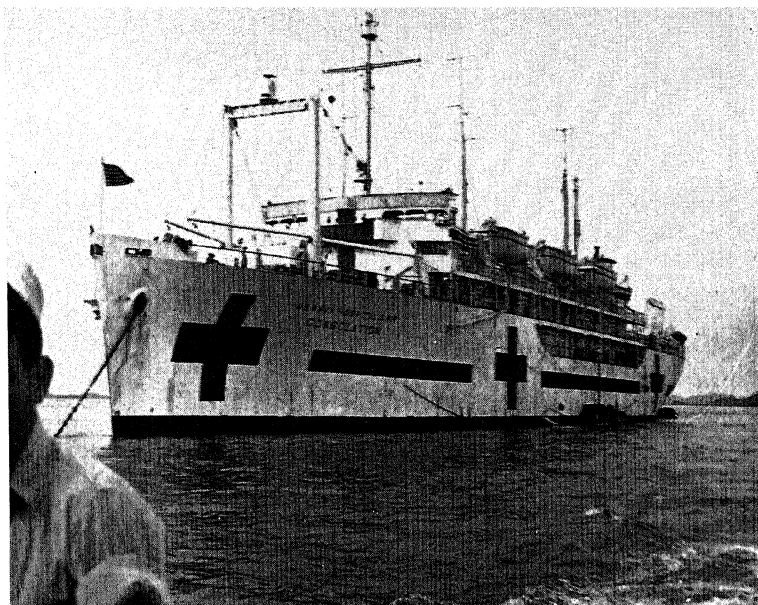
We (or rather Fred) finally located a Japanese driver who knew where the billeting office was located in Tokyo. The custom of a Japanese driver apparently is to say "yes" to everything, in order not to cause any displeasure, and then after one's gear has been loaded, and after the car has traveled some miles, he suddenly will turn around and ask: "Please, where do you want to go, please?"

In addition to the darkness and the rain while trying to reach the interior of Tokyo, and the billeting office, we also were driving on the wrong side of the road, meaning the left side. And though I always have tried to be a cosmopolitan at heart, the sight of traffic all going the wrong way, including bicycles, never ceases to be a shock to me at first—although I do try to remain quiet about it and not comment.

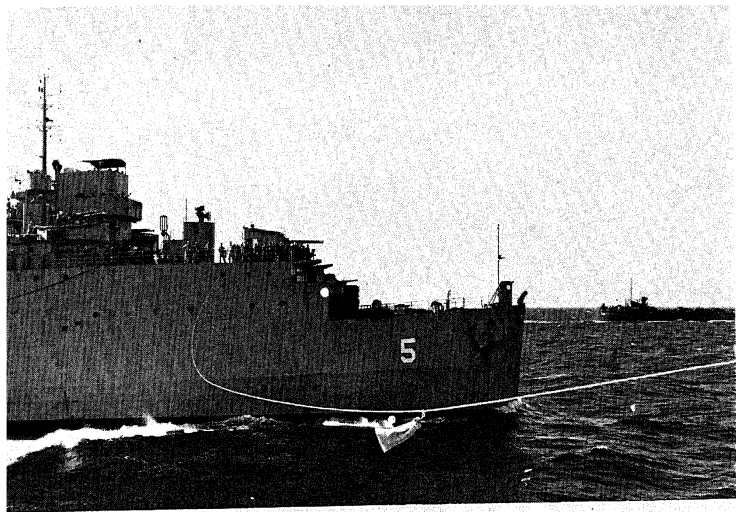
Fred had been in Tokyo before the war, and so had I. But my stay had been only for a brief while and long ago—so long ago that the only name-place I could remember was the Imperial Hotel, and I knew damn well



This shows the accuracy of carrier planes. An enemy ammunition train has just been hit near Kumchon, Korea.

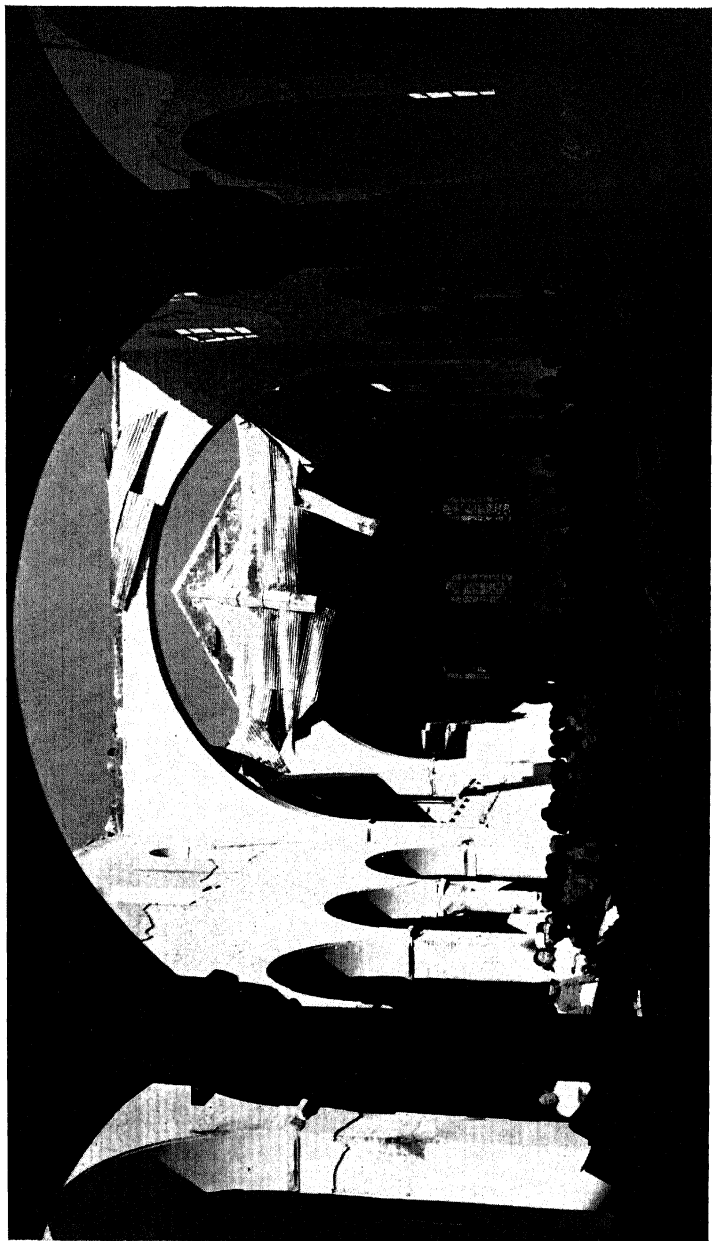


Aboard a hospital ship. On right notice patient with radio headphone as mentioned in text.



*Above:* The U.S.S. *Gunston Hall* transfers mail via the high line to another vessel while en-route to Wonsan invasion.

*Below:* And here's what happens to that most precious of things, a letter received aboard.



A member of the Roman Catholic Monastery at Tokown, Korea talks to the monastery orphans. The monastery was burned by Communists the day before they evacuated the area.

that lieutenant-commanders would not be allowed to be billeted there, rain or no rain and hunger pains.

"Please, where do you want to go, please?"

Fred: "The billeting office. It's run by the Army."

"Where is the billeting office, please?"

Fred, kindly: "It's downtown somewhere," and still kindly, "We'll stop somewhere and find out. But you listen."

"Yes, thank you."

The time by now was fluttering somewhere between ten o'clock and eleven o'clock. We were not quite sure because we had not yet changed our watches to Tokyo time. But we were sure that we were hungry, and we were sure that we needed a drink, and we were sure that we did not want to stay outdoors all night.

The night watch was on in the billeting office when we entered. This meant that a corporal seemed the sole one in charge, and in front of him, as if waiting to buy tickets to the Rose Bowl, was a line-up of other figures who seemed as eager as we were. I have stood in line to be vaccinated, I have stood in line to be punctured for cholera, diphtheria and tetanus. I have stood in line to take down my pants and cough. But never before had I stood in line with such humbleness as wanting a mere Army cot somewhere for the night.

Fred, being a full commander, was to be billeted off in some opposite direction in the city from where I was entitled to go. He waived this in writing—and it had to be

written—that “by his own request” he would share my fate, and in the slums if need be. Because of the conferences coming up in the morning at headquarters we would have to be together to talk things over.

Fred’s turn at filling out the many blank forms handed us by the corporal was not so hard for him. He is one of those geniuses who has a memory. He can remember his serial number, his place of birth, his age, his date of rank, the date of his marriage, his wife’s maiden name, the number of his children, and also whether or not he is in the Navy.

But when the same type of blanks, in triplicate with carbons, are handed to me I rather get confused and generally end up by being married to my own mother whose maiden name was Bessie Adams and, as next of kin, we had seven brothers and sisters who also were our children. So Fred once again courageously took over for me by asking for new blanks and filling them out himself.

“Just sign here,” Fred said thoughtfully. “Just sign here. At least you can sign your own name can’t you?”

Usually I can, but even this is not always easy with an Army corporal looking on—and as a bulwark between me and a cot for the night. My middle name is Carlton, but my trembling fingers made it “Darlton.” And as for my date of rank I never have known, and apparently neither has Washington. For I have asked repeatedly, and quite humbly, but it always seems to be in “the other files”—whatever they are. Fred said: “Put down any God



damn date you feel like. I want something to eat."

The army corporal, after phoning around, said we would be billeted in the Yuraku which, for all we knew, might be a city park. But after getting another car, and loading our gear again, we went there. The Yuraku turned out to be a hotel of sorts with many stories and with many more lines of officers, Army and Navy alike, awaiting at the cashier windows to fill out more blanks.

First we had to fill out and sign triplicate blanks that we would return the pillows which ultimately would be loaned us. And then we had to fill out and sign triplicate blanks that we would return the pillow slips—if any could be found for us. I have yet to walk out of a hotel with a pillow under my shirt, nor do I think Fred ever has, but we signed anyway. And also for our respective cots and the room.

We signed for our sheets too, but the paying in advance for all of this had to be done at other windows with different kinds of money, partly in yen and partly in "monkey money," and Fred said: "For Christ's sake, let's go in the barroom and have a drink and order something to eat."

So we went into the barroom, sat down at a table, and ordered something to drink. The Japanese waitress very politely and very correctly took our orders on a piece of paper and then said: "Please wait a minute," and she rushed away. After we waited a long while, a manager came over and asked if we had tickets.

"What kind of tickets?"

"Club tickets," he answered. "Yuraku Club tickets."

"No, but where can we get them?"

"Up on the fifth floor," he answered. "You can get them up in the office on the fifth floor."

"Thanks," we answered, and started to go up to the fifth floor.

The manager hesitated, as we arose to go to the fifth floor, and then generously said: "But you'll find the office closed now. It's after midnight."

Others were still drinking in the barroom, but all we could do was glance at their drinks, in passing, and we walked away in search of something to eat in the dining room. We sat down at a table in the dining room and ordered food. Our orders were accepted all right, and written down, but the food didn't come. After a while we asked about this, and were told we should have colored squares of pasteboard.

We asked: "What color?" And some were shown us as a sample, but not presented to us. We would have to buy them at another window which also was closed now.

Fred said: "Thanks." And we went up to our room which luxuriantly was furnished with four other cots besides our own. The occupants of these other cots had not arrived yet, but they soon began arriving, and continued doing so throughout the night.

## Chapter 5

DURING THOSE EARLY DAYS IN TOKYO ONE COULD HAVE thought almost that we of the Navy were underground people and that even the Japanese must have felt a little sorry for us, and about what had happened to our one-time great fleet which had defeated them. And also about what had happened to all our Navy planes.

The pitch was that some of us had to get to Sasebo, a Navy supply base on an island at the extreme southern end of Japan and where our few remaining aircraft carriers made up for their rather lonely but overworked strikes on Korea.

We had only one seaplane available for trying to make the regular run from the base out of Tokyo to Sasebo, and this lone seaplane was in such desperate need of overhauling that we never were quite sure whether it would take off when scheduled to do so. I was due to board the jeep carrier *Sicily* at Sasebo, but I certainly didn't feel like walking half the distance of Japan to get there, and leaping with a running jump between islands.

This is where Comdr. Red Gill, fresh from the States, came into all our lives with the gentleness of a typhoon. Long ago he had played quarterback for three years with the University of California, and I think he has momentary lapses that he is still out there playing. Should we on the line start to brood about something being seemingly impossible he figuratively would whack us on the rump to get going.

In the case of no plane to get us to Sasebo, Red Gill said: "Damn it, I'll fly you down there myself. I'll commandeer one."

"Ho-ho, and just where will you commandeer one?"

"I'll commandeer one somewhere," Red said, "and we'll leave in the morning. I'll fly it."

Red Gill's teeth seem to have been copied from a saber-tooth tiger. When he grins his face is nothing but teeth. And behind these grinning teeth, as a cover-up, he can say the damndest things and give the damndest orders, and yet all the while apparently smiling.

Though Red Gill is in the regular Navy, and has had a forced parachute jump plus a crack-up or two, he seems to defy every law made by either God or the Bureau of Personnel. His belt buckle, for instance, is so far out of regulation that nobody wants to comment about it, whereas if it had been only slightly out of regulation he might have been called on it. But his buckle and belt alike are of the massive type frequently seen in rodeos, if not around the bucking bull itself.

In the morning we piled ourselves and our gear into the only vehicle we could obtain for the ride to Tachikawa Airport. The vehicle was a closed-in one, no windows, and a cross between an ice truck and a patrol wagon. We sat on wooden benches along either side, and the rear door was partly closed to keep ourselves and our gear from bouncing out.

"How do you like Tokyo by now?" Red asked, behind his teeth.

We didn't answer him, and partly in fear, I suppose, of losing our own as we jolted along. Because we had no windows, and were shut in, we were partly spared the sight of everything we were dodging, or trying to dodge, in Tokyo traffic on a narrow road. That is, we were spared the sight ahead of us but not of everything our own Japanese driver left behind us in our wake. We could peek out the rear door and try not to believe what we saw.

Traffic in Tokyo, or almost anywhere in Japan, seems to be symbolical of the earnestness of the Japanese themselves. They know they have a lot to rebuild, partly because of our own bombings and also partly because the Japanese, whether men, women or children, don't seem to know how to sit still. At least in public.

The Japanese will work with whatever they have available to work with, whether a rock for a hammer or a kitchen knife in lieu of an axe. And the same principle seems to apply to their methods of transportation—any-

thing at all to get there, but preferably if it has wheels. There are horses in the traffic too, of course, but being led while pulling dray carts, and not ridden or driven. This is for the purpose, I was told, of sparing the horses as valuable property.

But what the thousands of bicycles may have in tow on trailers is something which would require an inventory beyond my capacity of listing. Behind us, even now, I saw a bicycle towing a huge load of straw. And another Japanese on a bicycle carrying a table on his shoulders. No wonder these people were at one time our greatest circus jugglers on a tightrope. For another man on a bicycle is also carrying a large windowpane. . . .

Yet obviously we cannot all occupy the same spot of the narrow road at the same time. Our Japanese driver solved this by honking with what seemed to be a continual honk, and at first I wondered why the other people on the road didn't get offended. And I still wonder. For from the rear we would see them trying to regain their balance on their bicycles, and with their loads, after we had passed. And if I had been in their position I would have picked up the load and heaved it at us, whether the load happened to be the windowpane or a baby being lugged in the back of a kimono.

Nothing like that occurred at all, not even a dirty look although frequently a surprised one. And I began to think, and whether or not I was thinking rightly, that our driver's constant honking was not being interpreted as a

vulgar demand for the right of way. But rather as a greeting, and acknowledgement to these other people that they were on the road too. And they might have been offended, while teetering with a load on a bicycle, had we not been courteous enough to scare the hell out of them.

Comdr. Red Gill, still camouflaged behind his grinning teeth, tried to tell us over the bumps what kind of plane he expected to commandeer and how he intended to commandeer it. But the whole thing sounded too much like a straight case of kidnaping. Yet we did have to get to Sasebo for the jeep carrier *Sicily* before she sailed again for Korea.

Red sang his favorite flying song: "Up In The Wide-Blue-Yonder—CRASH!"

We didn't join in. We hung on.

But the point of it is Red did obtain one of the few remaining Navy planes at the Tachikawa Airport. At least he said he had obtained permission to use the plane, and we took his word for it by climbing in with our gear.

The air-strip at Sasebo was known to be such a short one, ending abruptly either at a strong hedge or the edge of the water, that while we were in the air Red had a proposition to decide, and he told us about it.

"The brakes on this plane don't seem to be any good," he grinned jovially between his teeth, the same ones. "I noticed it when taxiing for the take-off. I don't think the plane could be stopped in time on the strip at Sasebo."

Whether or not he wanted to hold a conference in mid-air, I don't know. But I doubt it, as he is not the kind who generally holds conferences. Anyhow, the decision was up to him. So, after flying south for four hours we landed at Itazuke and taxied to the front of a tiny Navy building there.

But no sooner had we started climbing out of the Navy plane, and expecting to continue overland to Sasebo any way we could, than we were met by six Navy officers who ran out to the plane and surrounded us.

Well, what were we in for now? I wondered, and tried slinking into the background like a coward—and leaving everything up to Red Gill.

But what was occurring was this. The officers were qualified Navy fliers who, having no Navy planes to fly, were now assigned to other duties all over and everywhere. Yet, in hopes of getting in their monthly flight time anyhow to remain qualified fliers, they had paid their own expenses to come to the field at Itazuke, while on a twenty-four-hour leave, in search of a Navy plane, any kind of a Navy plane, to fly.

So, Red's descent in a commandeered plane was strictly a descent from heaven to them. Would Red—oh, would Red, please—let them take turns flying the plane while we continued overland to Sasebo?

"Would you, Red, please?"

"God, yes," said Red. "Why not."



## Chapter 6

EVEN DURING THE FIRST FEW MINUTES OF REPORTING aboard a Navy vessel, one almost can tell instinctively whether or not she is a "happy ship."

In this case the word "happy," of course, does not mean that everybody is standing around singing or playing games on deck. But the phrase does imply, among other things, that the members of the ship's company are not wasting their time being frightened of each other, or in hating the skipper.

I am always jittery when mounting a strange gangway saluting, and reporting to the officer of the deck. If he seems jittery too, then we both are sunk. But if he seems to know exactly what should be done next, and does it without showing a great strain on his part, then I rather know that the whole ship is run accordingly. It only takes a few seconds to get the feeling.

The jeep carrier *Sicily* was moored in the stream at Sasebo when I boarded her. She had just returned from another of her many strikes on Korea and was preparing to go again. She should have been in dry dock instead. The grass on her hull below the water line resembled an Arkansas pasture, and her paint had blistered and was shredding off. But I was looking at one of the few carriers which had been left to us for fighting a war. So the possibility of taking time out for a needed dry-dock job not only was remote but an impossibility.

As if the *USS Sicily* already had not had enough, a typhoon was reported on its way up from the south. This could mean winds up to a hundred-miles-an-hour or more, along with rain. So the ammunition was being loaded aboard before the typhoon struck, if it did strike. The crews which had been working all day would now have to work all night. But the reason was explained to them, the reason being "Janey."

All approaching typhoons are given women's names in alphabetical order. Since this typhoon was named "Janey," the next one perhaps would be named "Katie," or some name beginning with a "K," and so on.

In the captain's cabin the weather maps were out on a table, and the current reports on "Janey" were being followed and plotted. Was "Janey" veering away from us? Or was "Janey" still coming towards Sasebo? Strangely the best weather reports from the west come directly

out of Russia. But during the previous war, when Russia supposedly was our ally, Russia would not send out weather reports so that we could receive them in the Pacific.

The captain, Capt. J. S. "Jimmy" Thach, kept nothing secret from his crew providing security was not involved. His theory was that the best way to stop scuttlebutt and rumors was to dish out with the straight dope to all hands—especially when at sea and with no chance of the secrets being mouthed around ashore.

But the approach of "Janey" certainly was no secret by now, whether ashore or afloat. The Captain kept all his people informed on the latest word about "Janey." Everybody aboard knew why the ammunition had to be loaded, and why the work would have to continue through the night as well as the day without letup.

I have known skippers who would not let their people in on anything, and as a result I also have known "unhappy ships."

"Welcome aboard," the Captain had said. "Glad to have you with us. And meet our executive officer, Comdr. Lester Stone." I could have been entering a home which, in fact, the *USS Sicily* was, and despite all the battering she had taken and was yet to take. There was nothing to be done about her shattered paint and the grass on her hull. With the *Sicily*, it always was a case of coming in, loading up, and rushing out again.

But here we were in what had been one of the most

secretive and most defended Navy ports of Japan long prior to Pearl Harbor and during the war itself. The reason Sasebo is an unfamiliar name to most Americans is because few Americans ever had been allowed there. The harbor is an unusually large one and almost landlocked between high hills—but not high enough to keep out “Janey” if it struck.

Our mooring-buoys were reinspected and made as secure as possible. But the Captain still had to decide whether to try to ride out “Janey” within the harbor, and face the possibility of being dragged, or put to sea and try to ride out the typhoon there.

“The loneliness of command” may or may not already be a title. If not, it should be, because once I heard Capt. Thach use the expression. He used it in regard to having to make quick decisions and with everybody looking on in silence waiting for him to make them. “Then is when a captain can feel really alone,” he said.

Comdr. Red Gill and I had made the run from Itazuke Airport to Sasebo in a car borrowed from the Air Force and also an Air Force driver to take the car back. I do think Red Gill, by showing his amazing teeth, can borrow anything.

The run takes about four hours or so. Not because of the distance but because of the narrow roads which make sharp turns in what seem to be continual villages, and we in turn seem to be continually driving through narrow alleys.

These people in the south are not as accustomed to the sight of Americans as are the Japanese up north around Tokyo. The reason is, I presume, because few Americans were ever allowed to go through there to reach the vicinity of Sasebo.

But at the first sight of our American driver in the front seat, the Japanese children all along the route would do a quick double-take and then yell "Hello," perhaps the only English word they knew. And yet it is said that the Japanese cannot easily pronounce a double *l*. These Japanese tots could, and they gloried in yelling "Hello," a sort of game with them. They would run to the side of the road just to yell "Hello" at us, and we would yell it back, something which delighted them.

Yet in contrast to the children in France and Italy and in other places in Europe during the other war, these Japanese children never begged for candy or anything, or so much as put out their hands as a hint. I doubt if they would know how to do it. They would laugh and yell "Hello," and this would be the limit to their little game.

Red Gill boarded the *Sicily* with me. Being a flier he already knew his fellow flier, Captain "Jimmy" Thach.

"Well, Red," said Captain Thach, "I see you still have that big belt buckle."

"Yep," said Red.

And then we talked about "Janey."

Afterwards, when Red and I were alone, I commented

on how the *Sicily* seemed such a proud ship, and had struck me as such right off, and yet with everybody working their tails off with double- and triple-duty, and yet with no growling in secret corners about each other. For that's the first thing one hears on an "unhappy ship" is the growling. It starts instantly, especially to strangers aboard, as if the various factions are wasting no time in an effort to win newcomers to one side or another.

Red said: "In the case of the *Sicily* I can answer that one ahead of time for you. I've known Jimmy Thach for a good many years, as you know, and have watched him operate with his people."

This was a long speech for Red. He was surprising himself, I guess, so he paused to put his thumbs under his big belt before continuing. Or perhaps to see if I was going to start to argue. But I wasn't arguing, I was listening, and this too may have been a disappointment to him. He wanted something to buck, maybe the University of Washington line.

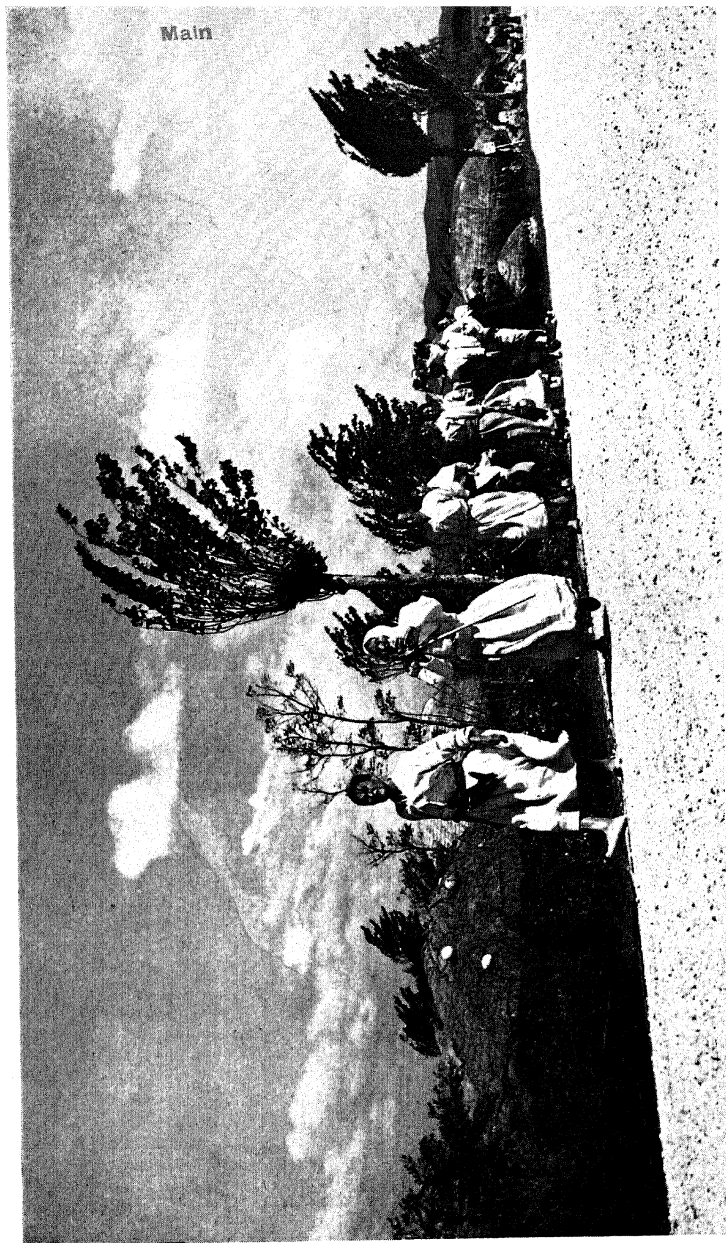
"So—" I said, waiting for him to continue.

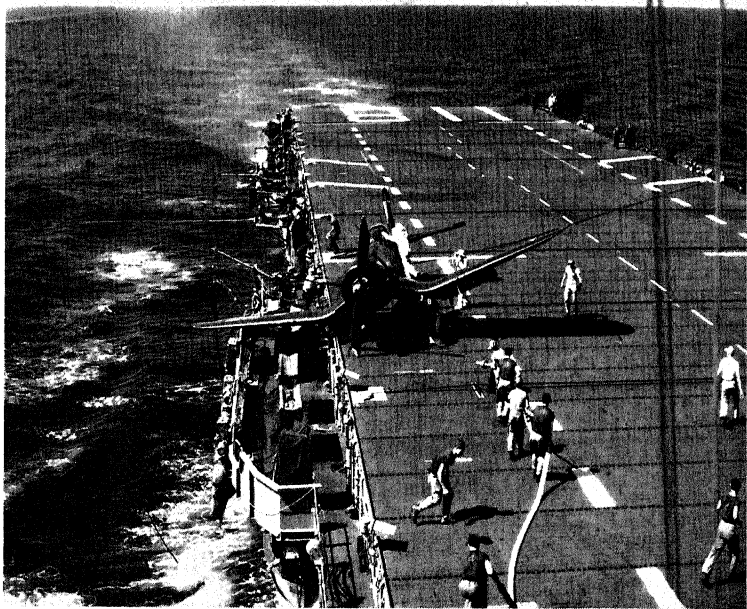
Red dropped his voice then, and relaxed a little by simply adding: "His people do their stuff because they're given a chance to do their stuff. That's all. He doesn't keep them muscle-bound in fear they might do something wrong—if they do anything."

Anyhow, I rather liked Red's choice of words. But I didn't tell him so. I merely have stolen them.

Main

Refugees fleeing from Pohang prior to battle.





**Above:** Aboard the U.S.S. *Sicily* preparing for a dawn strike. Plane is spotted on the catapult. **Below:** After plane skids into catwalk of U.S.S. *Sicily*, notice firefighter in white al-

ready clambering up the fuselage to drag the pilot to safety, but there is no fire. Note hose crew all ready in position, less than a minute after plane struck.



Yet we could not help but think now, with the task being performed so desperately and so excellently, of all our great people who from Navy generation to Navy generation, passed along the seed of carrier fighting, each contributing something new: our Ken Whittings, our John Towerses, our "Pete" Mitschers, our John Crommelins, our Jerry Bogans, our Artie Doyles, our Jimmy Flatleys—oh, and so many more, such a relay team for one country to have.

## Chapter 7

WHENEVER ANYTHING BIG IS IN THE MAKING WE generally give it away by trying not to look too wise. The make-up for the Inchon invasion was underway, and yet already was being nicknamed Operation General Knowledge.

Comdr. Red Gill and I knew we would be attached to the jeep carrier *Sicily* for this invasion. But first there was some Navy business to be handled in South Korea at the port of Pusan.

I went on ahead from Sasebo in an LSM overloaded with ammunition one third beyond her capacity. The skipper, a Merchant Mariner, kept reminding me of this all the way across that night. He was unhappy about our own mine fields guarding the port of Pusan, and he would keep saying: "I don't want to run into a mine with all this ammo aboard. I don't want to run into a mine anyhow."

He was a funny little fellow, but then so was the LSM.

As the Navy still had so few vessels of her own for fighting a war, we had to be content with anything that floated. And even this LSM did not belong to the Navy. She had been taken by the Army and operated by Merchant Marine officers under the Army. I never could get it all quite straight and gave up trying to. But the crew was comprised of Filipino civilians who could not speak English too well.

The navigation on this LSM was done on three bridge-and-deck levels, with one officer running up and down to three navigating bridges to get his sights and time. I would see him get his sights and bearing on one bridge and then run like hell down a ladder to get his time. We were supposed to be in a convoy, including Japanese freighters, under command of an English officer in an English destroyer. But we never could overtake the convoy because our port engine was broken down from overuse.

Our charts were all Japanese charts, the only charts available, and the wording on them was all in Japanese.

What our skipper was afraid of was that the English commanding officer in the English destroyer would swing around as soon as he entered Pusan and back-track abreast of us while we were still trying to enter through the channel in the mine fields.

"He did it the other time," our skipper said. "And then he had the guts to bawl me out over the loudspeaker so that all the other skippers could hear. But having no

loudspeaker of my own, I was too far away to answer back. But I'll fix him this time."

"How'll you fix him?" I asked.

"See those signal flags I got ready there? Well, when he passes me I'm going to hoist them. They spell 'NUTS C.O.'"

And since the C. O. meant Commanding Officer, and to whom our skipper was going to say NUTS, even I trembled a little before realizing once again that this LSM was not a Navy vessel and that our skipper was not a Navy skipper.

Dawn found us at the edge of the mine fields, and our skipper hurriedly looked for the secret pattern which had been given him before sailing. I was as obviously relieved as he was when finally he found it. But what we couldn't understand were the dozens and dozens of Korean sampans and other Korean fishboats gliding around seemingly aimlessly across the harbor entrance. They had to look out for themselves, of course, as we plowed along. But our skipper expressed his own opinion of them too. "They're always doing this," he said, "every time I enter. Why don't they go home?"

But, come to think of it, Pusan was their home.

"Look," yelled our skipper. "Here comes that English destroyer doing the same damned thing again! Not waiting for us, but turning right around by God by God by God. Get them flags ready, quartermaster! Get 'em ready!"

I wanted to close my eyes but also I wanted to have my first close-up look at Pusan. But the Filipino quartermaster, while trying to hoist NUTS C.O., got the lines tangled in the blinker-light on the bridge, causing the heavy blinker to swing around and break a pilothouse window. We had glass all over our feet now, and on the secret mine-field chart the skipper had been trying to follow. While all of us were scrambling to brush off the glass so we could see the chart, the English destroyer was allowed to pass by on our starboard uninsulted.

"But I'll get him next time," our skipper said. And then with a sweeping gesture towards shore, and back at me, he grandly announced: "You are now entering the stinking port of Pusan."

And so we were.

## Chapter 8

THE NAVY HEADQUARTERS IN PUSAN CONSISTED MAINLY of three elaborately broken-down chairs—quickly commandeered or borrowed from somewhere—and some boards thrown together for holding maps and charts. The room, or rather the rooms without doors, were at the end of a pier warehouse.

With all the gallantry of somebody entering the top-side of a warehouse, which is exactly what I was doing, I entered with my papers and reported. In Tokyo I already thought I had seen the Navy sunk as low as it could be, and just trying to get up again. But in Korea the Navy virtually had not been allowed at all—until after the shooting started. And then it was a case of rush, rush, rush, with whatever little you have.

But usually under such circumstances, the officer suddenly sent to be in charge, and to start something from nothing, will be an exasperated soul and two steps from a breakdown. He has a reason to be. Pusan then was our only harbor, our only beachhead for landing supplies, and our hazy front lines—if there actually were such things—were not far away in a haphazard half-circle of brush and hills.

Comdr. Michael "Mike" J. Luosey (pronounced "Lucy") was the officer in charge. He quickly had been sent over from Tokyo as a deputy from the Navy Command of the Far East. But instead of running around, waving papers, and telling the world how busy he was, he calmly sat there on a broken chair smoking a pipe.

This room, or rather these two warehouse rooms without doors, had also been his bedroom as well as the Navy Headquarters for all of Korea. This had simply been done by putting up cots at night for him and his tiny staff, and folding the cots up again in the morning.

Later an abandoned LST had been towed alongside the other side of the wharf to serve as sleeping and eating quarters for members of the Navy on duty in Pusan, but the food for each meal would be begged or borrowed from wherever it could be obtained—a delegation being assigned to go around daily for just this purpose.

Yet everyone was welcome to eat aboard the LST, and there was always coffee, despite the gypsy-like arrangement.

In addition to running the Navy Headquarters, Comdr. Luosey was also at that time organizing what we referred to as "Luosey's Marines." They were the young Koreans who later became known as the ROK Marines, but at that time they were drilling themselves to pieces all over the wharf, and at that time they had no arms. Comdr. Luosey was trying to get guns for them then, but as yet no guns were obtainable.

These young Koreans were doing their best, though, to imitate our own Marines, and for some reason these Koreans would sew cloth anchors on their blouses or else paint the anchors there. But what surprised us the most was the frenzy with which they used to keep drilling on the wharf, and under their own drillmasters. All day long they would be doing setting-up exercises, or trotting double-time, or climbing up and over the taffrail of strange vessels where the Koreans actually may not have belonged. But what equally surprised us, with all their lust for unison, were the times when they even would squat on the wharf and eat their rice in unison, dipping their chopsticks in time to a Korean drillmaster who waved something resembling a baton and who somewhat did resemble an orchestra leader.

"Luosey's Marines." Well, they have accounted for themselves since then, of course, although it is doubtful if any of these original eager beavers are still alive.

One afternoon when we were working in the Navy Headquarters, and had become accustomed to our dilapi-



dated furnishings, somebody just inside the outer entrance suddenly yelled: "Attention!" But we were so unaccustomed to this sort of stuff that we thought somebody must be playing a joke.

Instead, in walked, or rather rolled President Syngman Rhee, president of the Republic of Korea. He was a round little man, with a round face, and he seemed extremely out of breath, perhaps from having climbed the rickety steps to the upper deck of our warehouse. He was accompanied by Comdr. Luosey who introduced the President around to us, and then pointed to a chair for him to be seated.

The chair was the best one in the Navy Headquarters. But even so, the bottom was broken above the springs, and quite collapsible. The President, on sinking into the chair, gave a sudden surprised look, and then tried to be cheerful by looking around the rest of the room and apparently doing his best to start a conversation.

But all he could think to say was: "My, what a little place you have here." And, since he was speaking of the United States Navy Headquarters in Korea, there was nothing we could answer. For what he said was true.

So, after a while, and after shaking our hands once again in an effort to be pleasant, the tired round little man with gray hair rolled away, and still breathing hard.

And we returned to our boards again.

## Chapter 9

A CRUDE SIGNPOST AT A CROSSROADS IN PUSAN HAD boards pointing towards the various fronts and their respective distances. Day by day, of course, the fronts would vary, sometimes coming in closer and sometimes receding, but the general name-places would remain on the signpost, for it was not a barometer.

One of our assignments was to make a report on the handling of the recently wounded, and on through from the front hospitals to the harbor of Pusan where some of the wounded would be taken aboard the Navy Hospital Ship *Consolation* for her periodic runs to Yokohama.

Capt. Walter Karig, USNR, arrived in Pusan to take charge of the making of the report. And with him, of all people, came Comdr. Red Gill, which was good. For now we knew that, with him around, we could get transportation somehow.

We could have asked the Army in Pusan for transportation. And I think we did. But after all we were of the Navy, and still too timid from our recent resurrection to talk too loudly. It might not pay us to presume too boldly that we were Allies. Fortunately the First Marines already had arrived in Pusan, and already had proven what they had been trained for in hillside fighting, but had not as yet been allowed to have much say in their own matters either. We were still political Orphans in a Storm, then, the Navy and the Marines. And their own headquarters in Pusan looked the part, the same as did our own.

The Marine Headquarters mainly were the grounds of Pusan University, which certainly sounds elaborate. But it occupied less than a tiny square block of mud, and on this were the tents and the open latrines.

The office of the commander of the Marines, Brig. Gen. Edward Craig, was a small room upstairs in the main building, and what I remember most about the room was the falling plaster. It kept falling in amazing patterns even while we were being introduced around and talking.

The Marines were allowed no jeep of their own for running errands back and forth in Pusan, and were amazed how we had managed to borrow one at the pier to get out to their headquarters. They wanted to borrow it, too, for some emergency trip, so we let them.

Red Gill said to Brig. Gen. Craig: "Sir, we are sup-

posed to get up to a front field hospital as fast as we can. Can you get us there?"

Brig. Gen. Craig answered: "Of course. I'll send you up by helicopter!" It was done as easily as that, no papers to sign, no date of ranks required, the maiden names of our mothers not requested, and no promise in triplicate form that we even would return the helicopter, though we certainly intended to do so.

This was my first personal introduction to the power of helicopters in a next war which supposedly was to have been conducted by push buttons, skyrockets, and B-36s. I was to see much more of the use of helicopters later, of course, and with every command crying for one or for as many as they could get. But this was my first time at riding in one over that crazy terrain which is Korea, and in seeing how necessary they were for the wounded, and in dropping commanding officers around to the various posts, Gen. Craig himself having arrived at his preliminary command post in a helicopter.

A cement square, no larger than the wingspread of a helicopter itself, was where these first two Marine helicopters would take turns landing and departing from between the tents and buildings of the headquarters yard. The Korean civilians, from babies to old men with funny hats, would crowd against the wire fence lining the street to watch each departure and take-off. These Koreans seemed as amazed as we had been at first that these peculiar machines would be used in fighting a war,

and especially since their only armament was inside the holster worn by the pilot.

Helicopters at that time were being nicknamed anything from whirligigs to egg beaters, and there never could seem to be enough of them obtainable. Besides the pilot, they were limited to carrying only two people, except in emergencies. But already side blisters were being installed on some of the helicopters to make them broader, for carrying out the wounded crosswise on stretchers.

After our turn came to get into the two helicopters, one landing as soon as the other had taken off, we flew northward in the general direction of Taegu which at that time was one of the hazy fronts of the south, and among the mountains. I do think the Korean war has been described with too many native name-places which can be meaningless, or at least a blur, to people who have not been there.

We can, however, assume a certain delight in rattling off bewildering names just to watch the expression on the faces of people who don't know where or what the hell we are talking about. And why should they know? For we are not talking about towns or villages or rivers in the United States. And besides that, some of the towns and villages and rivers in Korea are still indicated on the map with Japanese names as well as the Korean ones, a holdover from the Japanese lengthy occupation. Even Pusan, for instance, though familiar now to all of us, is also spelled Fusan.

Anyhow, I prefer not to give too many names, other than that the winding river we followed partly northward in the helicopter was the Nakdong River, and occasionally we would see the dead bodies of white-clothed Koreans stranded on the river bank where the bodies had been washed up.

At another time while looking down from the helicopter, I am sure I saw a mass execution going on outside a village. Though at that time, in my early innocence, I thought the scene might be a line of recruits being drilled on a hillside, and with many of the village people standing out there on the hillside watching the recruits being drilled. Anyway, the line of perhaps forty men, and with their backs turned towards the crowd, seemed to be systematically falling as if being drilled on how to drop to cover suddenly. They would drop one by one, their faces to the earth, and with their arms dangling loosely. But if they were recruits being drilled on how to take cover on a hillside, they had no guns.

Our Marine helicopter pilot, so accustomed by now to making this run up the valley towards Taegu, seldom made any comments on what he saw. Nor did he ever point down to anything. He merely kept on going slowly and methodically, sometimes low over the villages, sometimes unusually close to the mountain sides, and sometimes well out over the river itself—that is, before we veered away from the river completely.

But he did tell us afterwards, when we asked about his

frequent changes of altitudes and directions, that he did try to avoid hidden snipers whenever he could. And that the experience of having been fired on every now and then had told him where some of these snipers were still likely to be.

So we were in somewhat of a no man's land even then, as Korea continued to be, and although supposedly at that time we were flying behind our own lines.

Not to get too much ahead of myself, in telling of this helicopter war, but I automatically wondered then—before having seen it demonstrated later at other places—how helicopters can manage to land behind enemy lines to pick up crashed pilots, and then get off again without being blasted to pieces. And I am ahead of my telling, but the answer is that fellow pilots of the crashed pilot keep a cover over him and around him with their own machine guns—until the helicopter lands, makes the rescue, and takes off again.

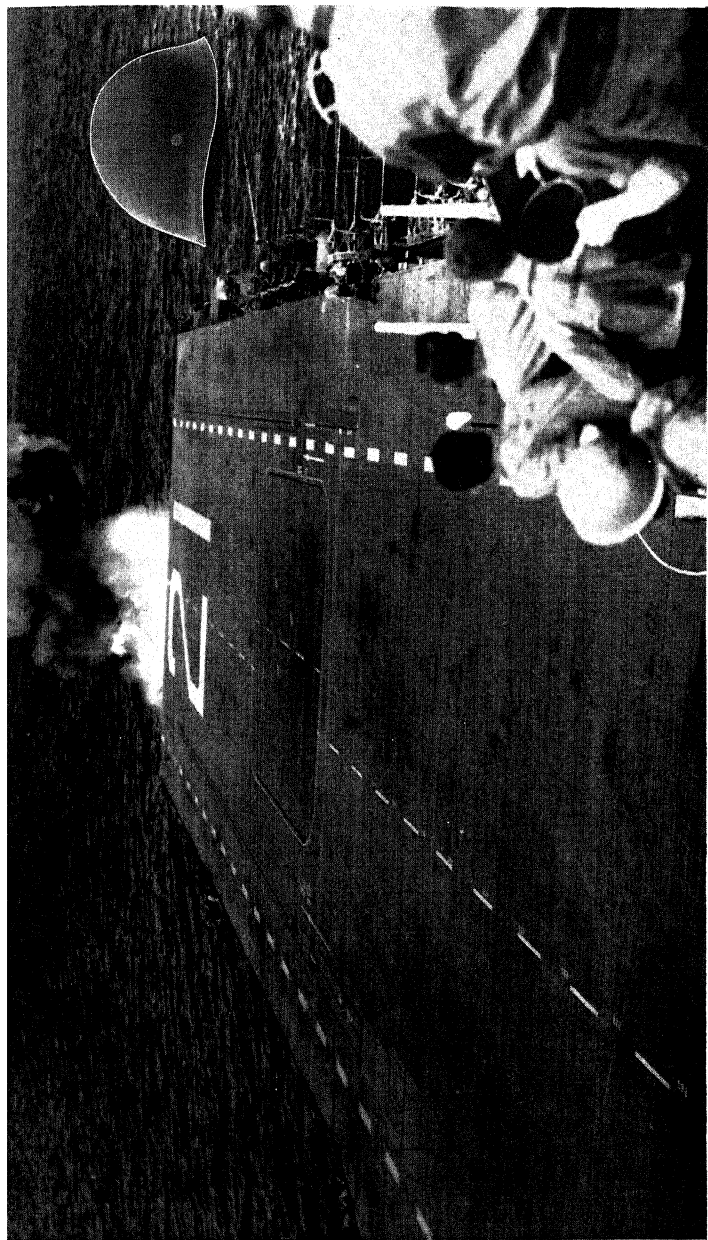
Ultimately we landed at Miryang, the site of a mobile surgical hospital and with ambulances coming down from the mountains. There had been a rain, of course, and with more in the making, as always occurs, so we had muddy lakes all around us and under us.

At first we naturally tried to avoid these muddy lakes, while we were walking towards the wounded still on their field stretchers. But I think we stopped trying to be so dainty the moment we saw our first American nurse on duty there. She was wearing trousers of some sort, her

wet hair was mussed all over her face, she was carrying something across the yard to somewhere, and seemed to be in a hurry. Anyhow she plowed right through a deep mud puddle, and kept right on going.

And even Red Gill, who usually has something to say, had nothing to say this time. He plowed right through the muddy lake too, and with the rest of us following.





An ill fated take-off from a carrier. Note in the upper righthand corner an excited observer in one of the gun mounts loses his battle helmet.



Unloading men and equipment during Inchon invasion. Again notice low tides.

## Chapter 10

ANOTHER INDICATION THAT A BIG MAKE-UP WAS underway for a big invasion somewhere (Inchon) was that a group of wounded Marine patients had slipped away without permission from where they had been convalescing at one of these field hospitals where we were.

What these Marines had done, as one of the doctors in command had just found out, had been to smuggle themselves into a hospital train for Pusan. They had done this to rejoin their own outfit which already had been called back for the make-up embarkation, and the Marines had not wanted to be left behind from their own company.

Unless we know Marines we might consider all this to be a little on the side of bravado. But that is not exactly the case. They know each other's language so well, and have been with each other so much through training camps, drills and finally the real stuff, that they can feel lost and lonely indeed when surrounded by only Army men, for instance, and whether or not these Army men are walking cases too.

We of the Navy can feel much the same way, and whether with the Marines or the Navy proper, and it's no secret. If we need anything ashore we prefer to go to the Marines, if they happen to be around, and vice versa. There may be several reasons for explaining this psychological factor, the background of our training being one of them, as more or less we always have been together, whether with first amphibious landings or what. The old myth of sailors and Marines not getting along together has now become quite a crazy myth, especially out in the wars where it counts. For I am not talking about kid sailors and kid Marines in boot camps.

Also, both the Navy and the Marines, at the start of the Korean thing, had something else in common, and mightily so. Each had been politically blackjacked practically out of existence, and openly described as of not going to be of much use anymore in future wars. Each knew better, of course, but they had to take the verdict and like it, or else be put out.

Anyhow, while up here in the field hospitals, the rest of us realized perfectly well why those wounded Marines wanted to get back to their own Marines, and as soon as possible, before their friends left for somewhere else on the next big campaign. And we were glad that the field doctor agreed with us, and that there would be no punishment.

The Army doctors and the Army nurses we saw at work remained as magnificent as at first sight. The

wounded, still lying on their stretchers after being brought down from the hills, also included some Koreans who, I presume, were South Korean soldiers. Though I didn't ask, for one forgets to ask those things when all faces are suffering faces, and bewildered faces, and despite any 38th Parallel.

The wooden structures which had been taken over for these hospitals had only dirt floors mainly, though not altogether. But the rains had started in again, and the sound on the roof seemed the only noticeable sound. For the rows of the wounded themselves were not talking, as they lay there. They had been doped for the recent rough ride probably, and could have been still doped, and this was good.

Ordinarily when people visit military hospitals in a city, to which the wounded may have been removed, there usually may be flowers around of some sort, clean sheets and sparkling white nurses. But our wounded this time were under field blankets, and every now and then the field blanket would have been pulled over some soldier's face, and he on his stretcher would in time be carried away.

As for flowers, even so much as a bouquet of wild ones, there were none, of course. Nor, I doubt if any would have been appreciated. There was instead an amazing silence—except for the rain. When the doctors and nurses talked, the talking was always about the medical readings, and so on, of this patient or that one,

and always the talking was so subdued as to be only a little above a whisper.

Yet even so, I could not help but remember by contrast the behavior of some of our wounded at Normandy and again in Cherbourg and again in Southern France. Some of these wounded would still seem pitched up from the battle while waiting transportation to somewhere else. They would chatter on with excitement, and would even try to gesture if their bandages permitted, much the same as football players might do after an important game. But I saw none of that in this particular place—in the far-off land of Korea.

A heaviness of doubt and bewilderment seemed to lie everywhere, as if we were in a different world, which in fact we were. And all the times I was in Korea, I never—not once—saw a Korean laugh. Nor under the circumstances could I blame them.

Finally Capt. Walter Karig, after finishing a note in his notebook, looked up and said: "Well, it really *is* getting dark, isn't it. Now, where else do we go to now?"

It could have been a peculiar prophecy, and almost sounded like one even then.

## Chapter II

THE AREA AROUND THE RAILROAD PIER AT PUSAN remained a montage during those brief days. This area seemed like some amazing stage upon which many costume acts, both Oriental and Occidental, were going on at the same time, and completely unrelated to each other.

We have seen operettas where this sort of thing might be attempted as a finale, and with more and more of the characters, in their unrelated costumes, pouring out from the wings to join the characters already on stage. Or at least bumping into them.

But the casts were never as large as this one, or as disjointed, or as unexpected. One afternoon on this stage of a pier, for example, quite a few of us were watching the berthing of the Army transport *Gen. W. F. Hose*, crowded with new Army troops for replacing, we presumed, the Marines who meanwhile had been called back down from the hills to make up for the next invasion—the one being semi-secretly scheduled for Inchon.

The sight of a crowded transport pulling in, and being docked, should be considered a big enough scene for any stage-set. But on this same stage was a string of railroad cars, each marked "Medical Department Hospital Unit Car," and wounded men were being transferred to these cars to be taken to an airfield outside of Pusan.

The more serious stretcher cases already were within the cars, the general method being to hoist them through the car windows. But the rest of the men were sitting around in groups next the tracks waiting the time to enter. Some had small bags of gear with them and some did not, but the men who could carry or drag their own bags into the cars did so. No favors seemed asked of anybody, and of course, there were no American women around to be handing cigarettes or things like that. For this was still Korea.

Yet while we were looking at these two scenes on the same identical stage—the wounded down from the hills and the new troops arriving on the transport to go up to the hills instantly—another act suddenly came onto the stage and separating the two contradictory acts already there.

This third act was really a lulu, a big one, and so unexpected that all we could think to say was: "Now, who or what the hell are they?" For marching out upon this pier of a stage, and directly between the wounded and the transport, were columns and columns of Korean



women. They were dressed in olive uniforms resembling dungarees, and the footwear of each was a pair of low tennis shoes. But they marched with such an earnest dead-pan that we wondered who or what they were.

The nearest we could learn was that they were recently organized South Korean Wacs, or the equivalent in their own language, and that already that day they had marched the six miles from their barracks to greet the transport, and almost immediately would march all the way back again. Meanwhile, after swinging into position to face the transport, they remained standing, and continued standing throughout, each retaining her original dead-pan. And this was their official greeting to the new soldiers about to disembark.

The women's backs were turned on the wounded across the tracks, but I don't think the wounded gave much of a damn.

The new soldiers on the transport, though, must have felt they should do something. They were so new to Korea that to them women were still supposed to be women, presumably, even Korean ones. So the soldiers, as if out of habit, threw out a few yoo-hoos over the rail. But getting no response, the soldiers soon gave up.

However, two Korean military bands, stationed at each end of the ranks of women, were startlingly good with American music. These two bands, in fact, seemed better than the American military band aboard the transport.

The one catch seemed to be, though, that the two Korean bands seemed limited to playing only one piece over and over, and they would alternate with playing it. The piece was "Roll Out The Barrel," and they really put the swing into it.

Later, when I asked why this one and only piece had been played over and over, the explanation was quite simple. It was the only American sheet music the bands had for all their members. And the Korean band leaders, through the aid of Comdr. Luosey, were trying their best to get band sheet music sent in of other numbers. The bands especially wanted the national anthems of all the nations which supposedly were to land troops at Pusan.

After the two Korean bands had alternated in playing "Roll Out The Barrel" twice respectively, a tiny group of Korean citizens wearing American clothes stepped forward to the gangway with a presentation to the commanding officer of the troops. The tiny group carried faded little American flags, hardly the size of a handkerchief, and the presentation consisted of two small bouquets of rather wilted flowers. But the commanding officer accepted them with all the grace of accepting a Cadillac. He was truly magnificent about this, as he stood at the end of the gangway.

Meanwhile, at another spot on this broad pier—the same stage setting—a barefooted Korean with no shirt continued pitching a baseball to another barefooted

Korean with no shirt, but who did have a catcher's glove. The pitching was none too accurate, as the baseball frequently overshot its mark, and had to be retrieved before rolling off the pier. But the pitcher's wind-up had all the glory and loops ever seen in a big league. He was great—up to the moment he would let the ball go. Yet, as another gesture to the American troops, he at least was showing that he knew of their game.

One might think that Korean Wacs—who could walk that far in one day and then walk back again—might in time become slenderized just from walking. But, though we could not help but admire them for what they had done this day, and appreciate them for their sturdiness, our hearts somehow continued to remain our own. And the squattness of their bodies, and the identical 400 and more dead-pan expressions, may have had something to do with it. When they wheeled about and started to march away again, we may have wanted to cheer them all right, and yet we had a feeling they might not like it.

The ceremony over, the troops from the transport lost no time loading themselves, their gear and their rifles into trucks which presumably were taking them directly to the front. Everything looked that way.

By now, too, the previous hospital train had pulled away, and another was pulling in.

## Chapter 12

A NAVY HOSPITAL SHIP AT SEA CAN SEEM SO QUIET AS TO have no relation to war whatsoever. And yet between her many decks are the maimed and the wrecked, but even they are usually sleeping.

The *U.S.S. Consolation* had arrived in Pusan for her strange cargo, and even she had berthed alongside this same stage setting of a railway pier. The wounded from the ambulances were hoisted aboard her in stretchers, and so silently and gently that even the hoisting gear seemed muffled.

Usually bos'ns are supposed to be hard people, and always shouting orders. But this bos'n, who supervised the hoistings from the pier to the deck, gave all his orders by the motions of his hands. Slightly to the right. Now, a little more slightly to the right. . . . And he said it all with his hands.

We were to board the *Consolation* for her run to Japan. This would help complete for Capt. Walter Karig his report of the handling of our wounded all the way down from the front to the hospitals in Japan. Immediately after that, almost instantly on arriving in Japan, Comdr. Red Gill and I would have to tail it south to rejoin the jeep carrier *Sicily*. For time was running short for the Inchon invasion.

Time was running so short, in fact, that even the Marines assembling along the Pusan waterfront for the take-off had little opportunity to conceal that something big was in the making. For they had no place to do much concealing. They used the open piers for offices as well as for their bedrolls, and at night, with flashlights and lanterns, staff groups of Marines would be working over their invasion charts and maps. The Marines seemed to be working over these charts all the time, getting the minute pieces together. For the Marines would be the first to strike shore on the Island of Wolmi-Do, leading to Inchon. And the tides? Yes, we already had heard what the amazing tides were like at Inchon, variations as much as thirty feet in a day. . . . So, no wonder the Marines, with their charts and tide tables, were working, and with flashlights and lanterns.

For Pusan had no street-lighting system of its own. The power had been cut off from the north.

While waiting for the *Consolation* to arrive and be loaded, we stayed one night aboard the *USS Henrico*, a

combat troop carrier which was getting ready too. But with the skipper, Capt. John E. Fradd, we tried to talk about everything except the thing coming up. We asked, for instance, how come the *Henrico* was named with such a Spanish name?

"It might sound Spanish, all right," the skipper answered. "But she's really named after Henrico County in Virginia."

Little things like that we talked about. And how come the Quarters where the three of us were to sleep were called "Boys' Town"?

"Oh, I don't know," the skipper answered. "I just happened to name it that for fun. It's where I put my guests."

Yes, little things like that we continued to talk about. And in the morning, on our way to the *Consolation*, we inspected another kind of a hospital ship being prepared for the invasion. This hospital ship was a reconverted LST, and a Navy doctor showed us around. He was proud of her, and he described how, when this LST touched shore, the ambulances could be driven right aboard. Or if the LST were held out at sea, the wounded could be taken directly aboard in Ducks.

All of us by now could not help but be extremely wounded-minded, and the notes by Capt. Karig kept getting thicker all the time. Red Gill would think of something, or see something new, and be quick to tell Capt. Karig. And I would try to do the same—though without as much certainty. For such a variety of acts

was going on all over the stage here at Pusan that my eyes as well as my mind would keep on meandering, and even the glaring red cross on the side of the *Consolation* could not always keep me in focus of our main job at that time.

Once, for instance, I was thrown out of focus completely by another sudden unexpected act on the stage, and had to let Capt. Karig and Red continue on ahead of me to the *Consolation* while I lagged.

Into the main street at the shore end of the pier a band of Korean prisoners came into sight, and all at once, as if they too were being hustled out of the wings onto the stage in time to be in the big act. Their regular clothes had been taken from them, and now all of them were barefoot, and wearing what appeared to be dirty gray bathrobes. At least I hardly would call them kimonos. The wrists of each column of prisoners were bound with long lines resembling clotheslines, and the Korean guards were ordering the prisoners to cross the street at double-time and enter a vacant muddy lot enclosed in wire.

The first band of prisoners was quickly followed by a second band, and then a third band, and still a fourth band. I could not see from where they were coming, as it seemed to be from between buildings near the pier, and presenting more than ever the effect of coming from between stage wings.

But certainly all of us could see what took place inside

the wire enclosure where all the prisoners were ordered to kneel, and to stay kneeling, as if all of this were but part of a strange tableau and not reality itself. Americans had nothing to do with any of this. It was all strictly a case of Koreans in uniform dealing with their own people who were now in thin dirty bathrobes, and nothing more.

What type of prisoners they were, or where they had been captured, or whether snipers or spies, we had no idea either. For their faces were the same as any other Korean faces. The prisoners tried to keep their heads bowed as they knelt, but every now and then they would peek out sideways at the guards as if in curiosity about the future. Nor could we hardly blame the prisoners for doing this, as already we knew what Koreans so often did to their own prisoners, and whether of the North or the South.

We could not help but notice the variation of the ages, elderly men in bathrobes bound to the wrists of boys in bathrobes. Next to the fence, for instance, and occasionally peeking up at me, was a silent and frightened little chap who could not have been more than fourteen. And kneeling next to him was somebody who, for age, could have been the lad's father or grandfather. But whether young or old, neither had any say anymore in regard to the hours immediately ahead of them, or whether or not—before the end of the day—they would get to grow any older.

A few of the prisoners managed to retain a few tiny



belongings wrapped in cloth, and a few others clung onto small straw fans. But to try to use them must have been another problem, what and all with the guards looking on, and also the wrist bindings. . . .

Anyhow, trucks bearing South Korean flags began arriving. As fast as the trucks arrived, the prisoners were ordered to get into them, and were taken away. They were taken out of town and beyond our sight. But to where, or for what, we could only guess. Yet there were those among us who said they definitely knew "for what." They said they had learned from the guards.

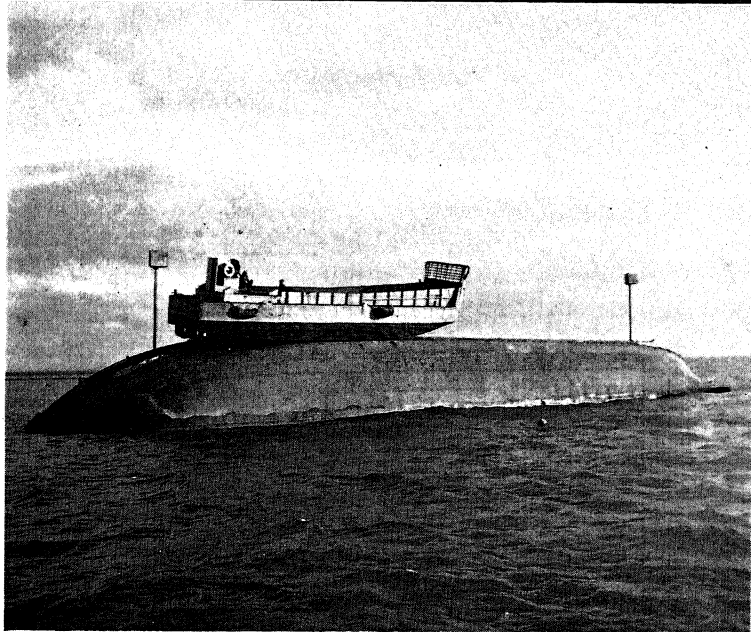
I hurried along the pier to the *Consolation* then, to rejoin the Captain and Red. The same Bos'n, with his same gentleness, was still supervising the hoisting of the litters. But the job was about through. We soon would get underway. The trucks had gone one direction with people, and the *Consolation* would go the opposite direction with people too.

## Chapter 13

ONE OF THE REASONS A NAVY HOSPITAL SHIP, SUCH AS the *Consolation*, can seem so quiet when underway at sea is because the bulkheads are insulated against sound, and we seemed to be moving without the benefit of engines at all. We could have been a mythical white ship gliding silently across the Sea of Japan.

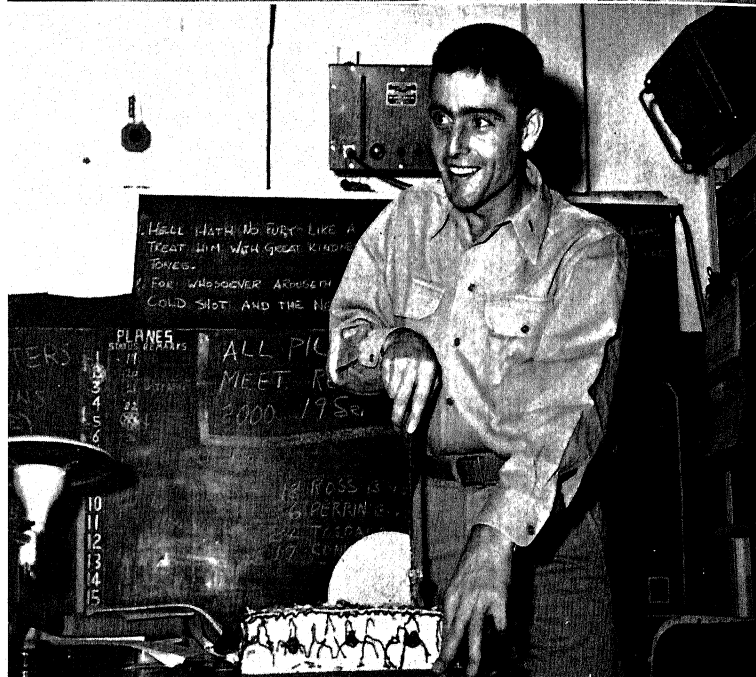
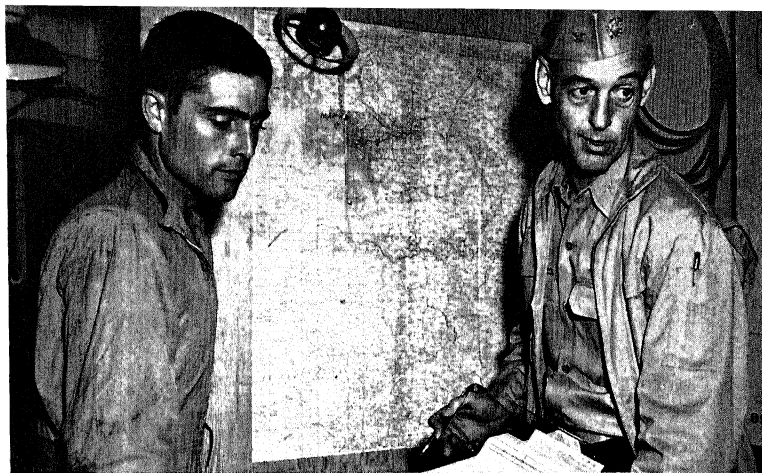
The rest of us, who had always been accustomed to the constant slamming and banging of metal against metal aboard other Navy vessels, were at first so mystified by this awe of silence that we automatically expected some big noise to break out at any moment. Such, for instance, as gunnery practice.

But come to think of it—and in time we did think of it—how could guns be fired if none were aboard? The hospital ship was so exacting about containing no apparatuses of a military nature that she did not even carry one for contacting submarines. Her simple radar was for navigation purposes only, and not for spotting enemy ships or planes.



*Above:* LST's high and dry after tide went out. Wolmi-Do Island, Inchon. *Below:* This indicates the thirty foot tides during the

Inchon invasion. This LCM was caught fast on the hull of an overturned vessel as if caught on a sandbar while tide was going out.

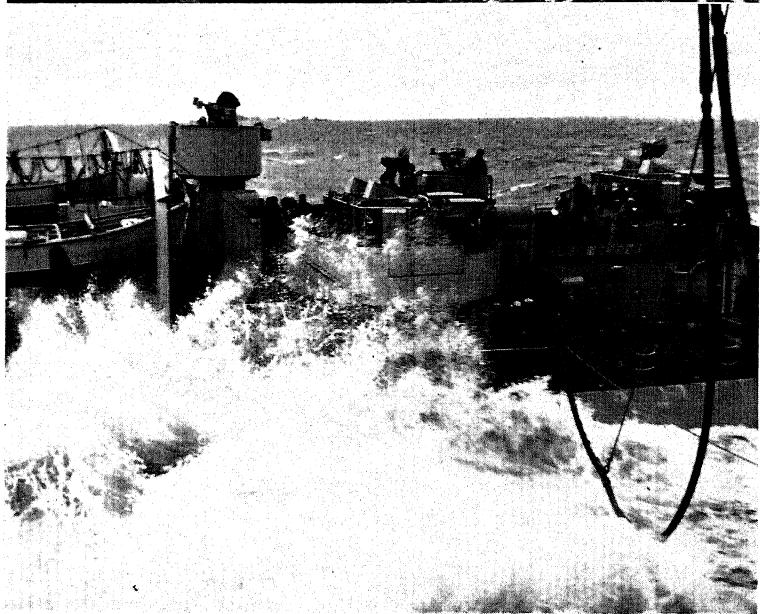
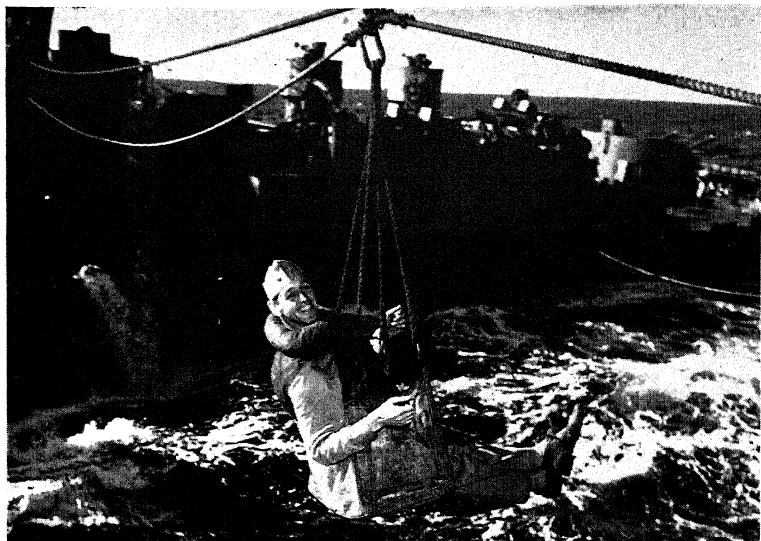


Above: "So now it comes out" says Capt. J. S. Thach after finally getting the word from Lt. J. V. Hanes, USMC, that he was the first fighter to land on captured Kimpo Airport.

Below: Lt. John Hanes USMC, cutting cake which the carrier's captain ordered baked for the pilot in honor of the Kimpo landing



First captured North Korean troops on an LCVP ready to board U.S.S. *Mt. McKinley* at Wolmi-Do Island off Inchon.



Above: "Look no hands," says Capt. J. S. "Jimmy" Thach returning aboard his carrier the *Sicily*, after visiting an escort destroyer

off Inchon. Below: Destroyer being refueled at sea by the U.S.S. *Leyte*.

"The Navy at least has one Consolation," was a phrase we heard aboard. In lieu of the emergency for more vessels, and what had occurred to the Navy in the previous years, this outrageous pun perhaps could be forgiven. Anyhow, we smiled when we heard it.

The striking of a ship's bell to indicate the hour and the half-hour was another sound we had taken for granted on all Navy vessels. But on the *Consolation* we had to depend on our own wrist watches. For the striking of the bell was taboo, too, in this effort to keep the hospital ship as silent as possible. Nor were there any bugles, or the other familiar sound of bos'n's whistles over the loud-speaker. The only time the loud-speaker was used was whenever some doctor would be needed fast, and he had been unable to be located by phone.

The patients, lying below on their tiers of bunks, were not without radios, however, and radio programs. It was up to the patients to decide individually whether or not they wanted to listen in. For to each bunk was an ear-phone connection, and strictly for that bunk alone.

These earphones had a two-channel connection, one for picking up outside radio programs and the other for picking up the ship's own station of musical records. These records had been obtained through the ship's own welfare fund, and some had been donated. But, again, no individual aboard that whole ship had to listen to radio unless he wished to do so, and on his own.

Because of the quietness which prevailed everywhere,

and the orderliness of the decks, we wondered how the main deck could always be kept that clean while taking on the wounded. The answer quite bluntly was that we had had an unusually easy loading compared to some of the previous ones.

During the earlier days, it seems, the *Consolation* had to serve virtually as a field hospital as well as a hospital ship. The wounded, with all their clothes and dirt still on them, would be rushed directly aboard the *Consolation* for what practically amounted to first treatment. The younger medical attendants now told us about it, for they had seemed the most impressed, and this had been their first war.

"We would cut off the clothes and shoes there on the deck, if we couldn't get them off any other way. But what I most remember was that god-awful dirt from the rice paddies—and you know what I mean. And the fleas—Jesus, the fleas!"

When the *Consolation* was still needing help most desperately in getting the wounded out of Korea was when—as fate would have it—another hospital ship, the *Benevolence*, was sunk in a collision with a commercial freighter during a fog off San Francisco.

"But do you know, when we first heard of the sinking of the *Benevolence*, which was to help us, we were in a bad fog, too, off Yokohama. We were in a bigger one than ever, after that news."

Though the *Consolation* has 786 hospital beds, and



more than 200 cots, in emergencies she seems capable of handling even more patients than that. At the close of the Japanese war, for example, she carried out more than a thousand released Allied prisoners of war.

Also, the *Consolation* has a portable field hospital, containing canvas beds, and so on, for emergency landings on a beach. But this war caught us so shorthanded afloat that our most was not enough.

So many of our young soldiers these days wear glasses, as a contrast to the old days when perfect vision was almost necessary, that an optical shop also was quickly installed aboard the *Consolation*. This is because a lot of the boys broke their glasses while fighting in Korea, and couldn't get along without them. So the *Consolation* also turned to in making new glasses.

The Sea of Japan remained calm during our crossing, as calm as the hospital ship herself. So, now that our work with Capt. Karig was about completed for his overall report on the handling of the wounded, Red Gill celebrated. But I think he celebrated in a peculiar way.

Some of us were standing by the rail talking when he started walking toward us, after having just come from below. He came with his jaws protruding, and with his amazing teeth in the open against the sun. Then he stood in front of us in this manner, and we didn't know whether he was going to bite or had swallowed something difficult.

Finally one of us said: "What the hell's the matter with you?"

This seemed to disappoint him. "But don't you see?" he asked, talking through his teeth. "Don't you see?"

"See what?"

"My teeth, damn it. I've just had them cleaned. This ship can do anything."

## Chapter 14

THE OVERWORKED *Sicily* HAD JUST RETURNED FROM another strike on Korea when Comdr. Red Gill and I boarded her at Sasebo, and now she was in the midst of preparing to go again—this time to give close air support for the Marine amphibious landings at Wolmi-Do and Inchon.

Her hull below the water line was just as scraggly as ever with sea grass. For she had had no time for overhaul or repairs. When the Korean war broke out, the *Sicily* was at San Diego, and had just completed a month of extensive flight training. From that moment on, everything had continued to be go-go-go for the little jeep carrier *Sicily*.

After crossing the Pacific to Japan, the *Sicily* had

joined up with a running mate, the *Badoeng Strait*, another jeep carrier as overworked as the *Sicily*. But their combination had been an odd one, almost a platoon system as with a football team. The demand for their respective Marine fliers in close ground-air support was so great in Korea that one or the other of the two carriers would have to be there all the time.

This meant that when the *Badoeng Strait* would be returning to Sasebo for more ammunition and supplies, the *Sicily* would be going out, or the other way around accordingly. In other words the two little carriers were team mates on the same team, but rarely on the fighting field at the same time. There just simply were not enough vessels at that time to allow for such a thing.

But on this Inchon Operation we were going out together, yet a strange sort of affection between the two little carriers already had been established. Because the *Badoeng Strait* is such an awkward word to pronounce, nobody even tried to pronounce it. She was simply the "Bing Ding" to all of us, and she remained that way.

But call names are different. The trouble with being christened with call names is that nobody aboard has any say in the matter, any more than babies when they are christened too. The call names are made up elsewhere, and far away, and we merely would be stuck with whatever was handed us, and we would have to like it.

We of the "Bing Ding" and the *Sicily* may have been lucky, after all, for the same fiends who presented us

with our call names also presented some corking call names for other vessels also, and which would be near us at Inchon.

I could understand such call names, for example, as "Yardstick," "Mudpuddle," "Squarehead," and even "St. Peter." But I would have to give a second take at such call names on the blackboard as "Frogspit," "Peacock Alley," "Hangnail," "Mattress Fatigue," and "Birth Pangs."

But we were not to the waters off Inchon yet, or even on the way. Yet we did know our sailing time, and that some of us could have a brief while for going ashore that late afternoon if we wanted to, and so I answered "Sure," which seems to be my custom.

A Navy Officers' Club in a port such as Sasebo, and no matter how small the clubhouse may be, is more of a practical necessity than is generally realized. When our various vessels are at sea, and working with each other, or even when they are at anchor—but at a long distance apart—such as in a harbor the size of Sasebo, we do not get to see or know much about our fellow people. They are on their own little floating islands, and we are on ours, and unless we have a mutual meeting-place we may never get to see them at all, at least informally, and get to know them personally and their problems.

The little Clubhouse at Sasebo, though comprised merely of a Quonset hut or so next to a patio near the waterfront, served us as this mutual meeting place. The

formality of official calls from one vessel to another could be forgotten there in our discussions—and then we might not meet each other again personally while a month or more at sea.

In the Clubhouse, for example, I met the skippers of the two destroyers which would be the accompanying destroyers for the *Sicily*, and which had been the accompanying destroyers right along on the previous strikes. But had I not met these two hard-working skippers, and gotten to talk with them, they and their destroyers, the 838 and the 836, merely would have remained numbers to me throughout the subsequent weeks at sea. I would have been looking at these destroyers operating with us throughout the days and the nights, but the skippers in my mind still would have remained numbers and not people.

The saying that as much can be accomplished over a table as over a desk, especially in regard to mutual understandings, is as true of a Navy Clubhouse as of anywhere else. For we can bawl the laughing hell out of each other there, if need be, and not put it in messages.

The tinkling of a few glasses helps too, of course, in this letdown of hair or whatever, and we will not have another chance at a bar for a long time. The fliers, when their nerves are on edge after having returned from some tough mission, may be rationed an ounce or so by their flight surgeon. But otherwise the Navy law about not having liquor aboard is still officially the Navy law as

set up long ago by the former Secretary Daniels. Yet whether or not this law is ever secretly violated is up to the individual to answer for himself. In this regard, I neither want to seem foolish nor act like a know-everything.

Yet in the Clubhouse, and while talking with the two destroyer skippers, we did see a strange sight. One of the skippers nudged me and asked: "Am I looking at what I'm really looking at?"

Two rosy-faced young ensigns, apparently fresh from the States for their first sea duty, had just entered this Clubhouse at Sasebo. If they were hungry and wanted food they could have gone to the adjoining section of the Clubhouse where meals were being served. Instead they had walked right into our section, and boldly right up to the bar, and had asked the bartender for two empty glasses.

Then what these ensigns did, while we watched with disbelief, was to take these two empty glasses to a bar table and fill them with milk from a milk bottle which one of the ensigns had been carrying.

"Well, now I've seen everything," said the destroyer skipper. And the rest of us could not help but rather agree with him.

We could not keep watching the phenomenon, however, because our time ashore was limited. The float for our shore boats was not far away, just below the signal building named "Fleet Activity."

After walking to the float, we said good-by to each other there, they to go to their respective vessels and I to mine. It was just as if we were parting for good, although their destroyers would be right along with us. But once again the destroyers would have become numbers, and with a lot of racing water between.

One of the skippers, though, did get in the last word. From his shore boat he called back across to the float: "Anyhow, Miller, when you write home, tell them you've undergone the sight of Operation Milk Bottle—and survived."

I nodded back to him that I would, and so I am.



## Chapter 15

FOR MY MONEY THE GREATEST YOUNGSTERS ON ANY SEA are the flight-deck crews of a carrier. These youngsters have to be seen in operation, during landings or take-offs, to be believed. I had wondered if this new generation of plane-handlers had changed any in agility or spirit since the previous war. I had been with the ones at that time aboard the *Yorktown* and the *Hornet*.

But now aboard the *Sicily* the kid brothers or perhaps even the sons had replaced at least some of the ones I had known before. Time and Wars march on of course, and yet from the island bridge aboard the *Sicily* we could have been looking down upon the same identical lads, mannerisms and all, who had done so much towards licking the previous war in the Pacific.

Even the various colors of their crew jerseys, a different color for each crew, were much the same, and equally as torn and equally as worn. Blue—for the plane-pushers. Green—for the catapult and arresting-gear crews. Brown—for the mechanics and plane captains. Yellow—for the plane directors. Red—for the ammunition, gas and fire-fighting crews.

All these colored jerseys might sound a bit more colorful than they actually are. In reality they have had a hard going over, there on the flight deck, and are faded from washings as well as being spotted with oil which will not come out. For these flight-deck crews—and we used to call them Airedales—are continuously on the go, sometimes crawling on their bellies behind whirling props, sometimes running like hell to repair a fouled arresting-gear cable before the next plane comes in, and sometimes literally ducking for life when a loose rocket from a landing plane goes zimming across the deck. Anyhow, these youngsters of the flight-deck crews are acrobats as well as a little of everything else, and they have to be.

During those dark years when almost all our carriers were being put into mothballs or worse, as if never again would a war be fought from the ocean, quite a few of us wondered even then what would occur to the training of carrier crews, especially with all the split-second teamwork required of them. For carrier work is a different type of work than required on any other kind of vessel. And the training would require longer than the time spent in getting a carrier herself out of mothballs.

Since the *Sicily* already had been in operation, and in training, when the Korean thing broke, we were not looking now at green crews but at skilled ones. And this was just plain lucky for us.

All of us already were familiar with a simple little story which had occurred on the flight deck of another carrier,

just out of mothballs, and trying to train much of her crew as she went along. A man was trying his best to learn to be a plane-director, an exacting job of signaling a landed plane on ahead to where it can be momentarily spotted someplace forward and momentarily out of the way of the rest of the planes coming in.

The man was getting his come-on signaling all right to the next taxiing pilot, but his directions somewhat wrong. He signaled one wheel of that plane directly over the side, and the plane balanced there.

"Oh, Mister," said the new plane-director to the amazed pilot, "you just must think I'm awful."

And the pilot, after getting his breath, merely nodded agreement.

This incident happened not to have been under serious or frantic circumstances, and so we still could afford to laugh about it. But when under pressure, if something like that had gone wrong with a green man, the precision of the whole flight deck could have been jammed up. Or could have been, as the green man had said, "just awful."

Because a jeep carrier the size of the *Sicily* has a flight deck of only 500 feet, or only slightly more than half the length of the flight deck of an Essex-class carrier, the handling and spotting of planes on the *Sicily* is measured by inches. On an Essex-class carrier, the class I had been accustomed to in the previous war, the spotting is measured by feet. So here on the *Sicily*, and before D-day, I

was trying to get myself adjusted to this abbreviated space, and was having a hard time doing it.

We were not in full operation yet, but merely on our way northward in the Yellow Sea to the waters off Inchon. We felt certain that the enemy knew we were coming—and referred once again to the nickname “Operation General Knowledge”—but had no idea how we would be met so close to the 38th Parallel. Would this be what the Russians had been waiting for? And would they now close in with their submarines? Would this be the time the enemy broke loose with its first real air attack? Or would the enemy come at us with suicidal Kamakazies as the Japanese had done in the previous war? We had no idea, of course, other than that the whole operation had been officially planned as “a calculated risk,” and that the plans further called for “no retreat” for our Marines once they attempted to land on the small island of Wolmi-Do, connected by a causeway to Inchon.

Everybody aboard the *Sicily*, from the mess attendants to the ship's barber, knew all about the plans, and exactly where we were going. For one of the first things Capt. J. S. “Jimmy” Thach had done, once we were fully underway and there would be no chance of the information reaching shore, was to inform all hands of where we were going and what we were going to try to do. In keeping with his custom, he had done this to avoid scuttlebutt.

"Scuttlebutt's a funny thing," the Captain used to say. "For instance if I were to hear some rumor started at the bow of the ship, and if I were to run as fast as I could to the stern, the rumor would have gotten there ahead of me."

Besides that, the Captain continued to want his people to be in on everything, as long as it was for the good of the carrier. If there was a danger of submarines (and there certainly was) he wanted his people to be the first to know of it. The rumor of having made probable submarine contacts was always with us, naturally. But before these rumors had a chance to grow too wild and too big he would lessen them down by simply explaining the facts. Or the same with the possible sighting of "bogey" enemy planes on the radar. Because of this frankness everybody remained alert to the true situations, and what to do about them.

Anyhow, the *Sicily*, accompanied by her two destroyers, continued moving on northward towards D-day. And in the distance on the Yellow Sea we could see the "Bing Ding" and her own two accompanying destroyers doing the same.

Meanwhile the amazing youngsters of the flight-deck crews, in their colored jerseys, were scrambling at their risky jobs all over the deck, in front of whirling propellers and behind them. The youngsters behaved as if they not only owned each plane but also the whole ship. And in a manner of speaking they did.

## Chapter 16

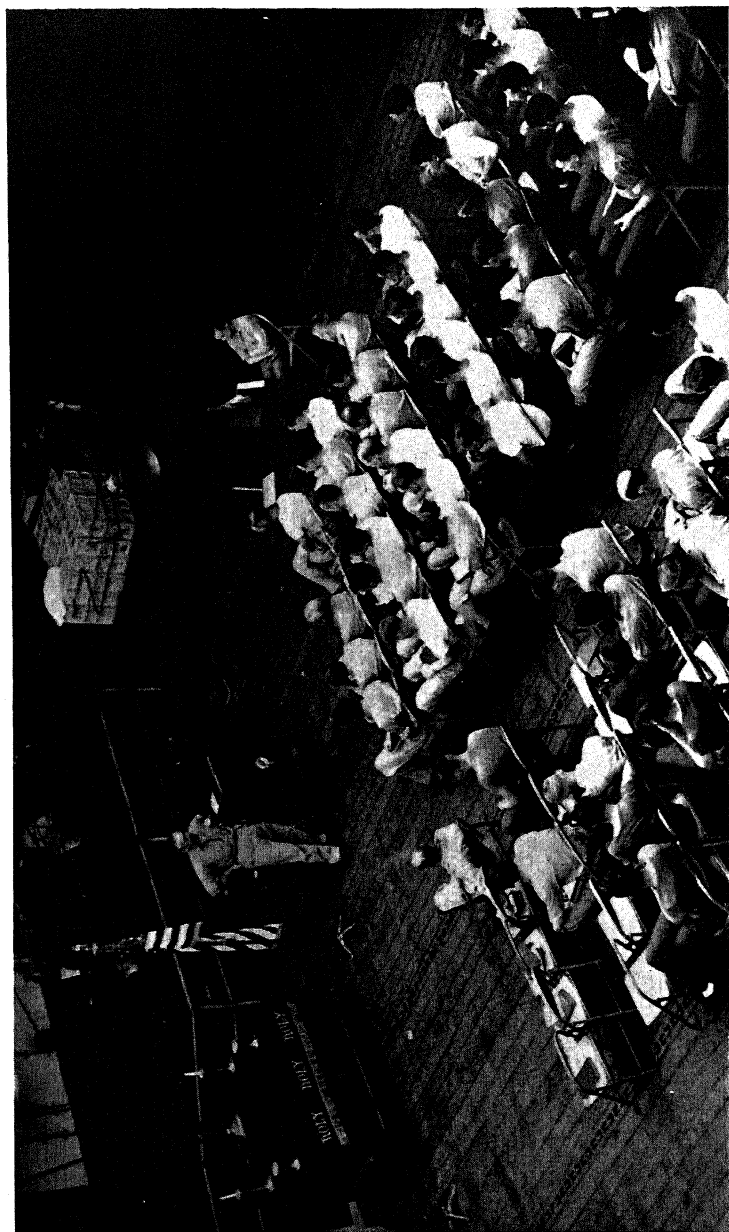
ALL OF US BY NOW MUST BE QUITE SICK OF THE PHRASE D-day, for we have had too many D-days for one generation. Yet here we were at it again, the dawn of the first big D-day strike on Korea.

General quarters already had been sounded throughout the carrier. But this was not unusual. General quarters was sounded every morning at sea an hour before sunrise, and whether D-day or not. For this hour before dawn, or just while dawn is breaking, is considered one of the most dangerous times for enemy attack, and so the battle stations are manned and ready.



**Above:** Maj. Robert Floeck USMC (right) gives Lt. Col. Walter Leichied USMC details of the death of Capt. W. F. Simpson USMC, shot down over Korea. Ironically, it was Lt. Col. Leichied's turn to point out where Maj. Floeck was shot down. **Below:** Then later it

was Maj. Ken (Rice Paddy) Reusser's turn to point out where Lt. Col. Leichied was killed over Korea. In the center is Capt. Jimmy Thach. Later, the French U. N. war correspondent, Jean Marie Marquis de Premonville, was killed.



Divine services being conducted on the hangar deck of a jeep carrier off Korea.



Yet peculiarly, of all the D-days I have seen, the ones I remember the most have been the ones with astonishing sunrises. And this sunrise over Korea was another one like that. The sunrise was more like a sunset than a sunrise, for a sunrise usually is misty. But there seemed to be no mist in the sky this morning. The sun, once it started showing itself over the horizon, was sharp and stern and with no heavenly nonsense about it, no pretty cloud ribbons. The sun almost could have been saying bluntly to our fliers: "All right, let's see what you can do."

The fliers had been prepared well ahead of time, of course, for the scheduled moment of the first take-off strike. They already were strapped in the single-seated Corsairs, and the props were spinning with the warm-up. The first plane was in position on the starboard catapult forward, and the second plane was in position on the catapult to the port.

The wind was not good that first morning for launching, for we virtually had no wind. The carrier made a wind by heading into what little breeze there was, and then putting on full speed. But because of the grass on her hull she was not making as much speed even then as we would have liked.

Yet the time had arrived. The first pilot, after revving his motor and testing all odds and ends, indicated that he was ready to be shot off. He indicated this with fast gesture mindful of a quick salute, and with equal quickness he then jammed his head back against the head-rest

in preparation for the catapult shock. With the whang of the cable he was away and off, his plane loaded with all the rockets and napalms it could carry.

The second plane on the port catapult was shot off in the same manner. But no sooner were they away than other planes were hooked to the same catapults consecutively and were shot off too—until the whole strike was away, the planes joining up in formation as they went along.

This first strike, in company with a strike from the “Bing Ding”—for yes, we could see their own planes taking off also—, had been assigned the task of burning off the Island of Wolmi-Do, preparatory for the Marine landings. This accounted for why our planes had been so loaded down with napalms.

“Burn off the Island,” had been the orders. “Burn it all off.”

So here at last D-day was on. But we still didn't know how prepared the enemy was for just this sort of thing, or what the planes would meet. All we could do was to keep on the lookout and wait.

## Chapter 17

DURING THE EARLY DAYS OF OUR FIRST CARRIER STRIKES in the Pacific in the previous war, our strikes would last only for about a day and then we would scam. We would tail it out of there and back to our base at Pearl Harbor.

This had been the way of it, for instance, with our first task-force raid on Marcus, and again on Wake. For the Navy was still little, and the distances to enemy islands through enemy waters was great—sometimes requiring a run of four or five days just for that one day's strike.

But here off Inchon, and even though we still did not have any too many carriers, our carrier planes were obliged to operate in an entirely different manner from the previous war. For this was not an island-to-island war. It was more like a hillside-to-hillside war. And our Marine planes of the *Sicily*, in their close air-ground support, frequently would return with mud on them as a result of their own explosions. This is how closely they worked to the ground in support of the troops.

And one time a pilot returned with his windshield smashed by a flying rock. The rock was still in the cockpit when he landed aboard. So he saved the rock to mail home.

So here at Inchon, as regards our fliers, it soon became apparent that we were not to have one D-day but a whole lot of them. And with as many as three and four strikes taking off daily from the *Sicily* as well as off our companion, the "Bing Ding." Other carriers of course were in operation too, but in a group of their own, and so only once or twice did we ever see them. For they were operating from a different quarter.

I had not had time as yet to know our fliers personally, or to recognize their individual mannerisms during take-offs and landings. But all of this was to come later during the subsequent days when we would be seeing each other all the time during the briefings and debriefings in the readyroom, or on the flight deck, or in their own quarters aboard ship. So if so much of these paragraphs seem generalized at the moment, the reason is intentional because that is how it was on D-day. We had not really become acquainted yet.

But I do remember how tense all of us had remained while working throughout that first day, and how the reports would come to us from our own fliers about how things were going ashore. For one of their jobs had been to try to be deliberately fired on by the enemy so that the hidden gun emplacements would be revealed.

on shore, and possibly be destroyed by napalms and rockets, before the guns could be turned on the landing craft filled with Marines.

The worst time possible, obviously, is when the boys in the incoming boats are helpless, or possibly even stranded on some sandbar off shore. They have to stay there and take it, and without any chance of giving it back. At a place like Inchon, with its fabulous tides of twenty or thirty feet, the opportunity to become stranded was always as big an opportunity as it was an unwelcome one.

The tide was high in the morning during the first landings on the Island of Wolmi-Do. But in the afternoon the tide was so low that mudbanks reached out a mile or more from the shore proper. And the landing crafts which had gone in, including some of the large LSTs, just had to stay wherever the low tide had caught them. They would have been helpless targets for any remaining shore battery—so our fliers had worked all day long deliberately trying to be shot at so that they could shoot back.

Our Navy vessels of all types were throwing in their own bombardments to shore naturally. But for effective work, the enemy's concealed guns really did have to be spotted first, and preferably from the air, although three destroyers previously had deliberately made sitting ducks of themselves in an effort to draw out the enemy fire too.

The enemy was notorious for its skill in concealing guns and camouflaging them. They would be concealed in the damndest and most unexpected places, whether under a strawstack or a church steeple. And as for camouflaging some of their big tanks the enemy had really worked out a lulu. This was to cover the tank with a load of straw, making the tank appear like a cart of straw, complete with a farmer sitting up there on it and supposedly innocently driving a team of oxen, but the tank underneath slowly would be moving along under its own momentum.

Yet the Marine fighter pilots of the *Sicily*, after having done close ground-air support in Korea since the first week in August, were so hep by now to so many of the Korean tricks of concealment that the fliers would not take for granted anything they saw without first investigating. This often meant flying so close to the ground, and looking in windows or at the side of haystacks, that one Marine flier described the flier in the plane ahead of him as "... flying so low, looking, that his eyeballs were out there scraping the ground."

This previous experience in learning not to take anything for granted was a godsend on D-day, and a very definite one for at least three of our surface vessels which were pulling in towards Inchon. For the two *Sicily* fliers, Maj. Kenneth Reusser and Capt. Charles Garber, became suspicious about an insignificant-appearing little lighthouse at the end of a breakwater south of Wolmi-Do.

Because our own Marine troops were moving around everywhere now, the orders to our fliers were not to strafe at uncertain spots without first getting permission from the ground-control. Yet Ken Reusser and Charley Garber, who had been flying together for a good many weeks, were certain that they had spotted an enemy battery within this innocent-appearing little lighthouse.

The two fliers were unable to draw fire on themselves, however, as the battery — as it turned out later — was silently aimed and waiting for bigger game: the three larger surface vessels which already had drawn within range and were still coming closer.

The two fliers instantly asked permission, and were granted it, to strafe the lighthouse to keep the personnel down, and then signaled the position of the lighthouse to the incoming vessels. The vessels reversed themselves, and fast, and after turning around at a safer distance they used their own big guns to blast the lighthouse. And what an explosion.

That innocent-appearing little lighthouse, hardly much larger in outward appearance than a beacon, could have been a bad thing for D-day.

Another thing I remember the most, as with almost all successful D-days, was the terrific letdown all of us felt afterwards that evening. We had been geared up for possible submarines. We had been geared up for possible enemy air attacks. We had been geared up to expect anything, and a lot of it. But the spearheading Marines

already had overrun all the Island of Wolmi-Do, and were now working to the mainland of Inchon.

Yet our fliers were still an excited lot that evening, after having completed their last strike of many strikes that day, and the fliers were now back aboard. To be sure, they would start taking off on more strikes the first thing in the morning. But D-day, with its awful expectations, is always a nice thing to be ended.

Even this was expressed in a better way, I think, by Charley Garber and Ken Reusser themselves. We had not met before. Yet while passing my room to get to their own, they saw that my door was open.

"Hi yuh!" Ken called to inside. And they introduced themselves, entered and sat down. For a D-day can do that also. It can do more than break up an enemy. It can break up inhibitions. For Charley Garber, I later was to learn, was one of the shyest persons I ever have known. And yet, along with Ken Reusser, one of the greatest fighter pilots.



## Chapter 18

A FLIGHT DECK IS NO PLACE FOR A MODEST MAN TO TRY to hide his modesty. Or for that matter anything else, including his personal feelings. On the flight deck he is as exposed to all eyes as if standing alone on a football field, and a flight deck is astonishingly like a football field, being equally as flat and equally the central focus.

When our days of operating off Inchon began turning into weeks the activities of the flight deck assumed such a pattern that we could tell exactly what was going on there whether we were working below ship or not. For a carrier has a sound for everything. And though the sounds are never melodious they certainly are distinguishable.

If we should happen to be below the flight deck forward, and immediately beneath the catapults, and if all at once we heard a slam-bang eruption as if not only the whole world seemed to be crashing in upon us, but also all the other planets along with it—well, then we knew without looking that another strike of planes was being catapulted off.

Someday a silent catapult—or what we simply called a “cat”—may be invented. But I’m afraid it will not be invented in time for this war, and so the below deck forward will still remain no place for a jittery man. At each take-off over his head he will think that if he dares to look out he will see only pieces.

The bridge on the island structure is really the place to be during take-offs or landings. For from up there we can look down upon the flight deck, as the emperors of old could look down upon their arenas, and without being such a part of them physically.

When planes return with loose rockets under the wings another disquieting factor on the flight deck is the custom of some of these rockets to bump free from the plane and to go skimming along the flight deck ahead of the plane, and as if hell-bent to hit somebody or something.

When this occurs a siren on the bridge goes whee-eee, whee-ee, whee-eee—meaning for all hands to take cover and duck, and not to remain gaping in awe at the skimming spectacle. For those rockets, in their furious glide,

change direction without notice. Though they do not explode, their fuses not being attached, nevertheless if anybody with open mouth and astonishment remains peering up over the edge of the flight deck to see which direction the rocket is going to go next the rocket might suddenly decide to enter that mouth and take the head along with it.

Sometimes these skimming rockets, as if encouraged by the wheee-ee, wheee-ee of the siren, keep right on going the length of the flight deck and over the bow into the sea. And they even may dodge through the wheels of parked planes to get there. Or at other times these rockets may hit something and be stopped. Or they may just stop somewhere on deck on their own accord, their momentum from the landing plane having been spent. Then is when two fast-running little fellows of the flight-deck crew hurry like sixty across the deck, pick up the rocket in their arms, then lug and heave it over the nearest side. Nobody wants to keep that rocket. Nor does anybody want it left there while more planes are coming in.

Even an approaching plane, on receiving a wave-off by the landing signal officer, has a sound all its own, too, as the pilot gives her the gun to zoom up and away for a better try next time. The plane, as if mad about it all, throws off a loud burring sound which echoes back up from the flight deck. The plane could be swearing at all of us, whereas the pilot dare say nothing about the wave-

off, and no matter how he feels. So the plane seems to be saying it for him.

Yet while safely looking down from the bridge on the island structure we can become nasty critics indeed regarding the landings. "Whoops," we'll say, if a pilot hits the flight deck too hard. "It's lucky he's got good tires." And yet we may be talking about some of our best friends. All critics sooner or later have a habit of getting that way.

At the same time, however, we retain a touch of generosity when some pilot, with his plane shot full of holes and perhaps with his flaps shot off, manages to make a beautiful landing anyway. For we have been holding our collective breaths while he comes in on the approach. His brakes may have been jammed by gunfire too. And we would not like to see him miss the arresting-gear cables, or do a bounce over the high last barrier, and possibly damage any of our planes parked up there ahead of him. For we were always running short of planes.

When such pilots come in with their damaged planes, and don't hurt anything while landing, we feel relieved and may even gesture our thanks to him in a modest way.

Their own facial expressions are wide-open property for all of us, of course, because on a flight deck, as previously mentioned, nothing can be concealed.

One day we were receiving, from a field in Korea,

two more pilots with two more planes for replacements. The two pilots had not done carrier flying for quite some time, and so naturally were rusty. But we needed the planes as much as we needed the pilots.

The first of the two new pilots got in all right, a perfect landing. But the second young pilot, though equally as anxious to make a good first impression on his future shipmates, did a kangaroo bounce of about ten feet, missed the first arresting-gear cables completely—and was headed straight for the rest of our planes which had been spotted forward. There was nothing we could do about it except to try to close our eyes and yet see at the same time, a difficult feat.

The plane, in the last fraction of a second, bounced down just in time to hook a last arresting-gear cable, and then bounced right up again. But that cable stretched and held long enough for the nose of the plane to smash into a barrier. There the plane promptly went on its nose, tail up, propeller smashed, among all the barrier cables which by now were twisted around that plane every which way like a fly in a cobweb.

Yet the rest of our planes were saved. So, now how about the pilot? The flight surgeon of course was out there instantly. For he and his medical kit stand by during all take-offs and landings. And the fire hose was out there, too, along with the flight deck's fire-fighting crew. Everything seemed to be out there, and with all the hands tearing at the plane. The poor pilot, who so

obviously had wanted to make a good first impression, was receiving an odd sort of reception instead.

He was so mad at himself that he refused assistance in getting out of the plane. He brushed aside all the arms reaching towards him. He got out by himself, slammed some of his gear upon the deck, and without so much as glancing back at the plane he kept right on walking towards the side of the ship as if fully intending to walk right off her.

The flight surgeon kept right behind the pilot, though, stride for stride. If a flying tackle had to be made I think the flight surgeon would have made it. For he did not want his quarry to get away so easily.

That young pilot, because of his humiliation in such a public place as a flight deck, was literally sick for two days, and yet he did not have a scratch on him.

## Chapter 19

THE READYROOM OF AN AIRCRAFT CARRIER CAN BE AT times the nearest to any decisive religion some of us are ever to know.

And yet a readyroom is anything but tidy. Perhaps a readyroom is the most untidy quarters of any carrier, and this untidiness is deliberate. Clothing and flight gear hang from all the bulkheads as carelessly as if these things had been thrown there and allowed to stick.

The chairs are long and with plenty of leg-room, and with ash trays imbedded in the arms. These ash trays are always stuffed with stubs and ashes. But some of these stubs have been crushed there, of course, by

friends we will not see again, although we may have been speaking to them less than an hour ago.

The bulkheads also contain maps and charts, and always somewhere is a blackboard with some new flight diagram or new code words for the day. A fighter pilot, flying a single-seater, had to take notes on so much, and remember so much, and do so much—and usually all at the same time while in combat—that I never have been able to overcome my awe of them. And yet for my own vanity's sake I always have tried my best not to let them know it.

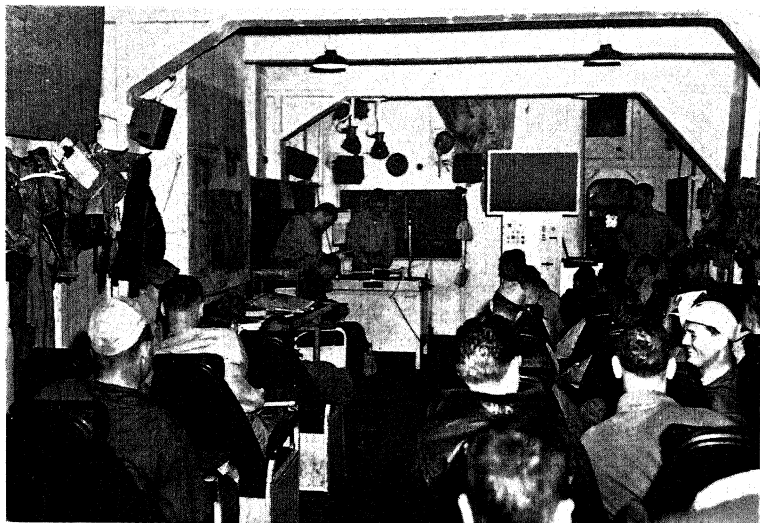
So in the readyroom, while listening to these fighter pilots make their reports after a strike, I usually sit there foolishly looking wise while recording their reports with pad and pencil. But at heart I cannot comprehend how they could have done what they have done, while away from us over strange enemy land. Yet I must pretend that I can comprehend, and this in itself is a lie. And a readyroom is no place to act out a lie, even to oneself.

The customary belief is that all fighter pilots, flying single-seaters, are supposed to be rather young. They are supposed to be almost of college years, and with a carefree swagger of sorts. But our fighters by no means were as comparatively young as that. Most of them had families back home, and most of these fighter pilots also, I presume, had their families in mind a great deal, and yet without harping about it. Certainly not while in the readyroom.





Ordnancemen storing 1000 lb. bombs aboard U.S.S. *Philippine Sea* prior to another Korean strike.



*Above:* Marine pilots in readyroom about to receive all-over briefing aboard the U.S.S. *Sicily* prior to early morning strike. Maj. Ken Reusser in right foreground with head turned.

*Below:* Same readyroom aboard *Sicily* during another briefing. At extreme left corner in back is Capt. Charles Garber, behind Lt. Andy Androsko.

The pictures of wives and children would be in the fliers' bunkrooms, though, and there would be snapshots of infants born after the fliers had been away. The pictures of all infants appear the same of course, being all head and eyes, but we were expected to see something remarkable in these babies which the fathers themselves had not yet seen in actuality.

But none of this, the family pictures and all, was for the readyroom; the readyroom being a peculiar combination of plans for dishing out death as well as how best to receive it.

A readyroom in itself, even its very name, is such a symbol of so much that I would prefer to avoid classifying a readyroom as being symbolical at all. The comparison is too obvious. Yet, whether obvious or not, the symbol is there each moment of the day. For all of us, no matter where we are, seemingly are in a readyroom too while our vessel, the earth, moves on. We have nowhere else to be, and we have no say in the matter.

Before each take-off from the carrier, the fliers are briefed in the readyroom. Not only must they know the code words for the day, and a multitude of other things, but also the fliers must know the likely location of the carrier, her speed and possible course, so that the fliers can find her again on their return. For a carrier at sea in enemy waters must always be underway. And here again, we who remain aboard the carrier have the advantage. We merely remain, and it is up to our fliers,

after doing their fighting or completing their mission, to find us once more, and meanwhile we may have been hundreds of miles from their sight.

But on their return—it's again the readyroom.

Always the readyroom. This is where the fliers report first of all, and again they become mortals like the rest of us. We say: "Hello, Pete," "Hello, Dick," "Hello, John" — almost as if we were their equals. And on the charts in front of us the squadron leaders, while using a pointer, tell us what targets were seen and what was done about them—or what was not done about them and why. The term for all of this is an awkward word. It is called de-briefing, but it should be called something else—some splendid word involving the utmost of integrity and modesty.

Maybe all pilots, during their de-briefing, are not like our own. But I am speaking now of the members of the Blacksheep Squadron, operating from the jeep aircraft carrier *Sicily*. From them I learned the meaning of integrity personified.

Had I, for instance, but just returned from a strike low into enemy territory, so low as to be able to look into windows for concealed soldiers, had my plane been damaged by anti-aircraft, and had I even so much as fired at a tank—well, I would have stood up there at the chart and have made a real story for myself. And I would have kept right on at it in hopes of spellbinding somebody, if merely myself.

But these fighter pilots, during each de-briefing, did me the dirty trick of refusing to elaborate, or to add flourishes, to what had occurred. I do appreciate a good spinner-of-yarns, but I was in the wrong place for that, and among the wrong people.

With each statement, and with each report, these pilots would recheck with each other to make sure that what they said was the sum total of truth and correctness.

"Yes, sir, I did spot the camouflaged tank, and I fired at it, and I chased that God-damned tank up and down the streets and around corners, and I just simply failed to stop that tank, and I don't know what the hell was the matter with me that I couldn't—"

And meanwhile the anti-aircraft holes in his own plane would not be mentioned until afterwards. All of which, to repeat, is no way to tell a story whether in a readyroom or anywhere. In my own case, for example, the holes in my own plane certainly would have come first.

Because a jeep carrier generally is crowded for space, our readyroom also had to serve double duty for church services on Sunday. The chaplain happened to be a Catholic padre, but he conducted services of all denominations for all hands. For the Catholic services the readyroom contained a bronze cross permanently attached to what might be called the pulpit (for Sunday) but otherwise used as a spare work desk for charts.

Throughout all the briefings and de-briefings, though, the bronze cross would remain on the front side of the desk. But we became so accustomed to this bronze cross being there that we no longer noticed it. Nor, while in the readyroom, did we consider as seemingly incongruous the constant sight of the chaplain's rather large crucifix leaning carelessly against the bulkhead near a corner — and almost as if Christ were resting until Sunday.

Yet nothing seems incongruous in a readyroom, for everything already seems to be there: a standing pot of coffee, open milk cans, a scattered arrangement of used-up old milk cans, coffee cups which as yet have not been washed, a pencil-sharpener into which everybody keeps bumping as they come in and out of the readyroom, letters in the process of having been half-written and other letters from home waiting around to be reread, and on the blackboard such oddly assorted code call-words as "Lovebirds" and "Shotgun Wedding."

The readyroom too is where we first would learn of the deaths of our friends, of our fliers who one by one did not return from their respective strikes. A fellow pilot, who had seen the plane go down in flames or gunfire, and who in fact had accompanied the plane virtually to the ground or the sea, would merely state with a strange simplicity what he had seen occur—and yet the two may have been roommates—and the rest of the de-briefing would continue on from there.

Such announcements in such a manner might seem blunt, and they were blunt. But at the same time Death never could be announced with more dignity. We would sit there in the readyroom and listen, before the debriefing continued, and only a fool would have made comments about his own feelings.

Judged by the comparatively small number of planes on a jeep carrier, we soon were losing far and away too large a percentage of our own people. This was mainly because of the close air-ground support tasks assigned to our pilots — tasks which only these Marine fighter pilots had been trained to do, and were doing as often as three and four times a day and every day. They would ferret out the enemy, and practically at the enemy's own ground level.

First we lost James English, and then we lost William Simpson, and then Robert Floeck, and then our squadron commander, Walter Leichied. I would give their respective ranks, but their ranks perhaps do not matter with them anymore.

Because one's own superstitions the same as one's religion should be respected as a personal affair, I do not care to reveal the various little tries for luck we naturally could not help but oversee in the readyroom or on the flight deck prior to each dangerous strike. Many of the pilots would have their own little things they did, and which exclusively belong to them. But in time the carrier

as a whole developed its own superstition, and so no personal privacy is involved in telling it.

William Simpson was flying our Plane 17 when he was killed. The replacing plane, to keep our numbers in consecutive order, was naturally repainted number 17 also. Robert Floeck was killed in this next one. The replacing plane again was numbered 17. And one day, from this third plane to be numbered 17, the cartridge of a machine gun was accidentally discharged, killing one of four plane-handlers on the hangar deck. He was George Curtiss Underwood.

But we still did not think of 17 as being anything more than another number on a plane until Walter Leichied was shot, and crashed, in Plane 17.

So, aboard the *USS Sicily* there will be no more planes bearing the number 17.

But there always will be the same old readyroom, I hope, with its dangling flight gear, its used coffee cups, and its protruding pencil-sharpener against which we always kept bumping and snagging the pockets of our pants.



## Chapter 20

"HAPPY HOUR" ABOARD A CARRIER IS A PHRASE WHICH can take a little remodeling. But anyhow we were to hold a "Happy Hour" for our overworked crews. This was on the day when we moved to within the many islands directly off Inchon and came to anchor—the first time we had come to anchor or had stopped flying during the operation.

Yet we needed more ammunition, and so had moved in to calmer water to have this ammunition loaded aboard from an ammunition barge while we were at anchor.

Since planes do not operate from an anchored carrier, our planes as well as our pilots remained "grounded" aboard, as it were. The sensation of having their first day's rest was something of a shock to them. They hardly knew what to do with themselves. They were like people on a Sunday who are all dressed up but with nowhere to go.

A few of the pilots spent part of the day sewing on

buttons, writing letters, sleeping, or just walking back and forth on the flight deck which by now was oddly quiet all at once. No more thundering of the catapult, no more whee-ee, whee-ee-ing of the siren for skimming rockets, and no more calls over the loud-speaker: "Flight quarters!"

We suddenly had become an odd and comparatively quiet carrier. Or at least the flight deck was quiet. But below in the hangar deck, where the ammunition from the ammunition barge was being hoisted and handled, everything was not so quiet. For all the crates and the tins of ammunition were being speeded along rollers on the hangar deck. Or else being broken up or smashed open with all the noisy ambition which can be put into that sort of thing by young men who seem to revel in turning big noises into even bigger ones. Besides, all the crews which got through their share of the loading in time could attend "Happy Hour," scheduled for four o'clock that afternoon.

"The "Happy Hour" committee, led by the ship's chaplain, already had announced "a search for talent" from among the various ship's divisions aboard, each division being asked to round up an act of some sort if humanly possible. But the time was a little too late for that, and as the day went along the "humanly possible" began leaning more and more towards the impossible, and with what threatened to be somewhat disastrously for "Happy Hour."

Could any quartets be organized aboard? Well, possibly, except that Mike, who can sing tenor, was still working on ammunition. And Dan, who could do bass, was still working on plane number 22, and was likely to be still working on it "for God knows how long."

"Well, we'll just have to come up with something."

"O, Happy Hour. O, Happy Hour," a young gunner began ironically, while sponging out his aft turret gun.

Previously the way the youngsters of the flight-deck crews, for example, had amused themselves between landings and take-off jobs—and prior to any announcement of a "Happy Hour"—was to use a vacant spot on the flight deck for playing football with a rag football they themselves would quickly make each time, and also generally lose over the side each time, thereby ending the game. For there would be no more time to make another rag football before "Flight quarters! Flight quarters! All hands man your flight quarters!"

But another amusement these youngsters had while manning their flight quarters—and although they might not like me to tell about it—was to make their own various comments on the respective landings. For most of these flight-deck crews would be watching the landings while at eye level with the deck. That is, the young men would be standing down upon the side catwalks where ducking could be quickly accomplished if need be. Or from where, at the same time, they quickly could leap out upon the deck to repair something if need be, too.

A plane's landing hook might get fouled in the arresting gear. Or the arresting gear itself might get fouled, and a cable not rise when it should. Or a bit of planking might get torn out of the flight deck from a bad bump. But whatever it was, or possibly could be, it would have to be repaired swiftly before the next plane landed, and the next plane already would be circling for the approach to do just that.

The agile Airedales, each assigned to a specific task before it happened, worked with such enthusiasm and speed that they seemed to enjoy accidents happening. Also the youngsters had their own opinions about the various planes and pilots during landings. And though I perhaps should not have been listening in, there were times while standing among them that I could not help but overhear.

"Look at old Number Five coming, and dipping his left wing too much again. If he gets another wave-off we'll have to shoot him to bring him down."

During our operations at sea we had received practically no mail—although the receiving of mail is the untitled "Happy Hour" of all happy hours—and so another crack I would overhear these kids make during the approach of a fighter from a strike: "It's the mail plane. It's the mail plane. Oh, goody, and he's got a letter for me."

Yet those days were temporarily ended now of course, and so while at anchor among the islands off Inchon we

did expect mail to come out to us. While waiting to find out whether or not this would be true, a few of the plane-handlers, while off duty, started to play baseball on the flight deck. That is, they had a bat and a ball but nowhere in particular to hit the ball without danger of it going over the side. So the game had to remain a feeble game, almost in fact a sissy one.

On my previous carriers of the other war, such as the *Yorktown* and the *Hornet*, they were so much larger, being of the Essex-class, that the flight decks allowed more space both for touch-football and a subdued type of throwing a softball around. At least on those larger flight decks if a catcher missed a ball it did not necessarily mean the loss of the ball.

It was during one of these games while at sea when I saw our captain on the bridge do a rather clever thing. He was Captain Artie Doyle, of the *Hornet* and now a rear admiral. He noticed that a new boy down there on the flight deck did not have a glove, and was having difficulty overcoming his shyness with the older fellows anyway, for they had been together a long time. So the Captain, after going into his own locker in his bridge cabin, called the new kid up to the bridge and said: "Here, sonny, I notice you have no glove. So here's one I used to use myself in the Naval Academy. You can have it."

The kid, after returning to the flight deck, was still so excited and so thrilled he hardly could catch a ball.

But Captain Artie Doyle was filled with tricks like that for the good of his people. Yet where he kept all these gloves and all his footballs was apparently a secret known only by him. Also—and shame on him—that particular glove had never seen the Academy.

Yet frequently, when a football would go over the side, another one mysteriously, and almost magically, would drop upon the flight deck from the *Hornet's* bridge. For this same Captain who so quickly had tossed the ball would not remain in sight or even seem to know anything at all about the new football.

Well, back here again aboard our own *Sicily* off Inchon, four o'clock finally came, and with it the beginning of the "Happy Hour."

The aft elevator had been lowered from the flight deck to the hangar deck and would serve as the stage. A piano and a microphone had been placed on the elevator—and we were away with the program.

All the ammunition, however, had not yet been loaded from the ammunitions barge. So while the "Happy Hour" proceeded at one end of the hangar deck the clang-clang rolling of ammunition crates over rollers continued at the other, and somehow did not seem to blend any too well with our first number, a sailor playing on a mouth organ.

Or with the second number either, another sailor playing a saxophone.

The third number, which was the finale, was a piano

accompaniment with bass viol. And with that the "Happy Hour" was over. But the surprising thing I always will remember was the tremendous applause and cheering each number received. If there had been even an inch of unusual talent, the audience—so desperate for live entertainment of any sort—would have turned this applause into thunder.

I had been watching the program from the flight deck by looking down through the elevator opening upon the elevator. And near the end of the program, when the ship's overall loud-speaker called out the familiar order: "Sweepers, man your brooms! Sweep down fore and aft!"—when this occurred, a sailor next to me laughed to another sailor: "Pay no attention, Pete. It's all just part of the act."

But I noticed that the two of them started moving towards the broom-lockers anyway.

## Chapter 21

AT DAWN NEXT MORNING ABOUT TWENTY OF US WERE IN a landing craft, and actually on our way in to Inchon to put our feet on ground for a change. By the way we behaved in the landing craft we could have been school kids suddenly released from school for an unexpected holiday. Or as if teacher was sick, and without a substitute.

When the information was authenticated that the *Sicily* would have to remain at anchor among the islands off Inchon for a few more days, Capt. J. S. "Jimmy" Thach grabbed this first opportunity to give his over-worked fliers a change of scenery. That is, as many fliers as could be spared and still have some on hand in case of a sudden emergency.



The fliers would now see from the ground what all along they had been seeing and bombing and rocketing and machine-gunning from the air in their single-seated fighters, Corsairs. Why I got to go along in the first landing craft that dawn I do not know, except that there was room, and the Captain said: "Sure."

The currents around Inchon were always swift and uncertain. The great range of those ungodly tides made this the case. Even when we had been at anchor we always seemed to have been underway. The currents would go tearing by us, and taking with them the huge jellyfish of the Yellow Sea.

But what had most impressed the fliers in regard to these tides, and the fliers talked about it now while in the landing craft, was how islands suddenly would appear which had not been on their flight charts. This at first had confused the pilots until they became used to it. But an outgoing tide, during these daily tide ranges of twenty to thirty feet, would produce big islands which had not been there when the pilots had first gone in on a strike, and they would have reason to wonder "Now where the hell am I?" while starting to return to the carrier, far off shore and out of sight.

On our long way in to Inchon in the landing craft, William "Andy" Androsko pointed out the spot in the water where he had been ditched not many days previously. And there were so many wild coincidences associated with the ditching that almost all of us in the land-

ing craft remembered each coincidence, for one or two other fliers with us in the landing craft had each bitten off a share of these coincidences. Especially Maj. Ken Reusser who was sitting right beside me now.

I'll try to keep it short, and yet the whole run of events is as good a sample as any of how Marine fliers stick with each other during their close air-ground support.

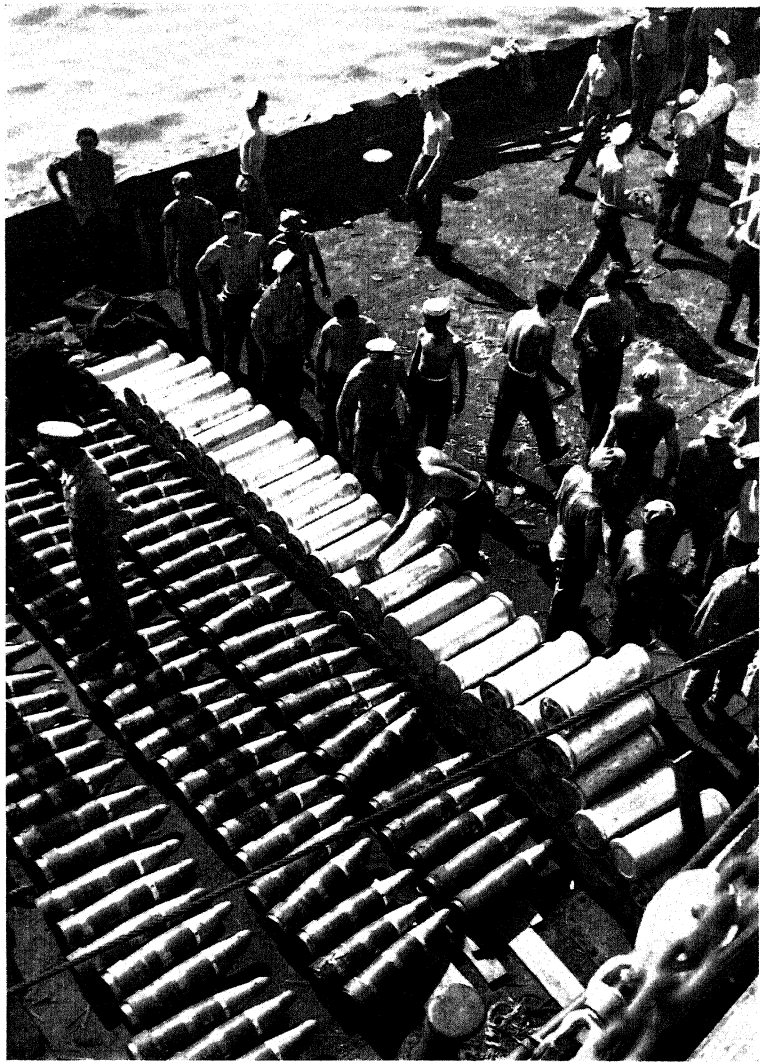
Andy Androsko's plane had been hit—and hit badly—by enemy fire quite a distance behind enemy lines, and for obvious reasons he neither wanted to parachute nor crash-land back there.

So with what was left of his plane, which was not any too much, Andy headed back across the lines toward the Yellow Sea, losing altitude each second.

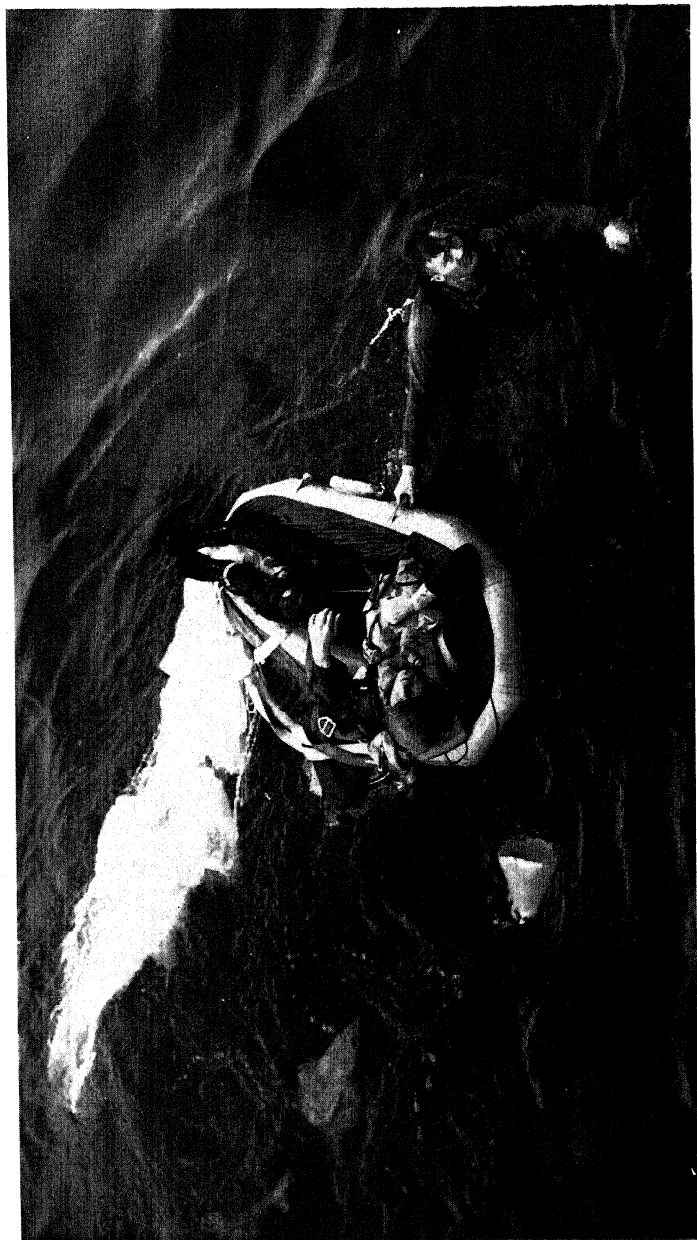
Ken Reusser was one of the Marine fliers who continued riding with Andy while Andy was losing altitude and literally being an accident looking for a place to happen, preferably this same spot in the Yellow Sea where we were now.

Under such circumstances the pilot riding wing on the damaged plane accompanies it right down to within a few feet of the actual crash itself, and all the while giving advice over the speaker in preparation for the water-crash.

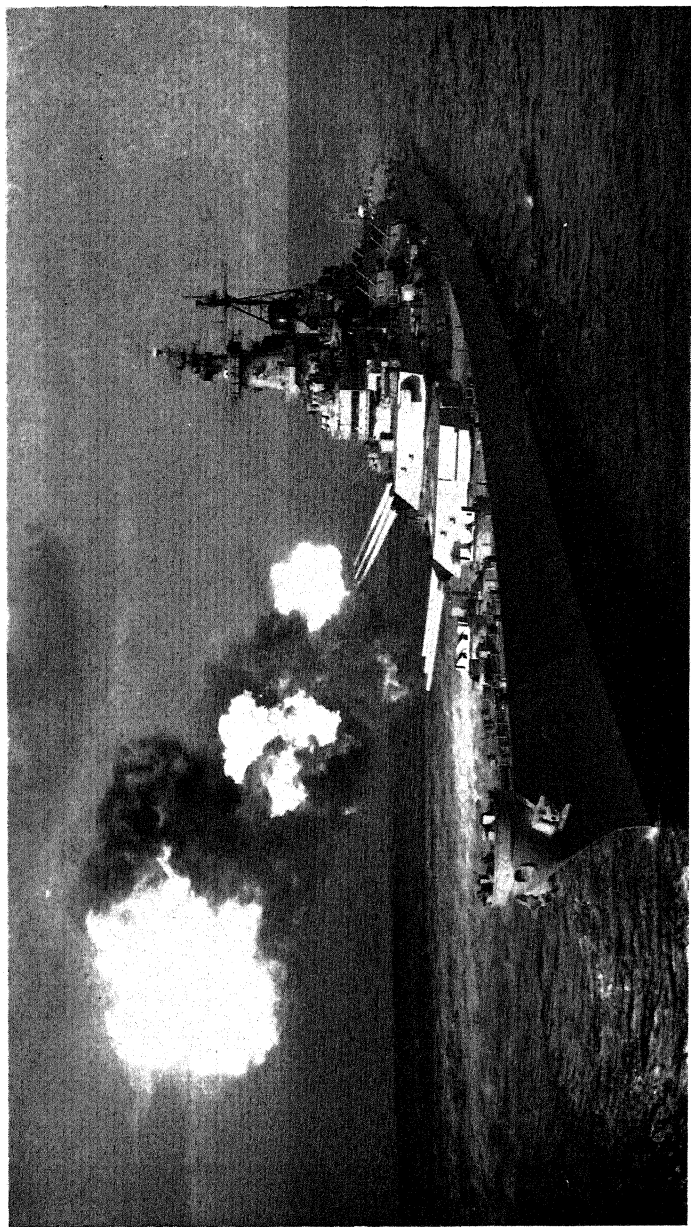
Well—and now for one of the coincidences—when the Korean war was new, Andy had ridden wing for Ken under much the same circumstances. Ken had been hit by enemy fire while near this same town of Inchon, and



Sailors unloading ammunition from ammunition barge.



Wounded by enemy gunfire and forced to parachute, wounded Lt. (JG) Nathan E. Curry is rescued at sea. The parachute is the white streaming off to the left.



The U.S.S. *Missouri* bombarding Chong-Jin with her 16 inch guns.



Landing craft circling in transport area awaiting signal to land during Wonsan invasion.

had parachuted into a rice paddy within range of enemy fire. Then was when Andy had ridden wing for Ken, and had remained over him, protecting him, while summoning the help of a Marine helicopter. And the helicopter, though being fired on, did land in the rice paddy and rescued Ken.

But now, weeks later, it had been turnabout for both pilots, and with Ken this time throwing out the customary advice over the speaker to Andy in preparation for the water-crash.

Ken to Andy: "Andy, is your shoulder harness locked?"

Ken to Andy: "Andy, did you jettison your canopy?"

Ken to Andy: "Andy, unload all ordnance."

Ken to Andy: "Lower seat. Extend flaps. Did you disconnect your headset cords? And be sure to disconnect your safety belt when you hit the water."

Andy Androsko hit. His plane sank within a few seconds, but he himself was free of it and swimming—and because he had followed all of Ken's instructions.

A minesweeper, while on her regular duty of sweeping for mines, happened to be heading casually in the direction of Andy Androsko, so merely kept on heading, and picked him up. From the deck he waved up to Ken, still circling above, that everything was all right, and so Ken turned back towards shore and continued on with his assigned strike.

Andy in time was returned back aboard our carrier by a helicopter piloted by—and for the third coinci-

dence—Lt. Robert A. Longstaff, who previously had rescued Ken Reusser from the rice paddy.

That's the end of that story, except that Maj. Ken Reusser never did live down the name that the rice paddy had given him. His name, despite the spelling, is really pronounced "Rice-er." And so it was quite simple for all of us from then on to call him "Rice Paddy Rice-er." It required no talent on our part at all.

In the landing craft we continued on towards Inchon and also continued pointing and gossiping about everything we saw. What had been but names and charts to me, during the briefings and de-briefings in the ready-room, were now reality.

The outgoing tide of Inchon already was catching us, and once or twice we scraped bottom while still a mile or so from shore. For the mudbanks just seemed to be rising up everywhere around us, and without warning. We saw another landing craft which seemed to be doing all right while coming out from Inchon, so we moved towards the craft and got our directions from the cox'n. Yes, there was a narrow channel all the way in, and he pointed out its course to us.

Capt. Charley Garber, one of the Marine fliers, pointed out something else. He pointed towards the outer end of an unusually long breakwater quite some distance away on our starboard, and he said to me: "See, that's it."

And I asked: "What's it? What are you talking about?"

Charley answered: "What's left of the little lighthouse



Ken and I found and machine-gunned. The one with the hidden battery which had been waiting for our ships. You remember."

"Oh yes, yes." For sure enough the end of the break-water was little more now than a heap of crumbled cement blocks and mangled iron—all that was left of the ambush after the ship's own guns had got through with it.

While passing the hilly Island of Wolmi-Do we also saw a damaged building with the American lettering: "Standard Oil Co. Storage." This had been marked on our own flight charts of Wolmi-Do, but now we were looking up at all of this from water level, and the big American lettering at such a far-off place did seem strange. And Ken "Rice Paddy" Reusser, on looking up at the damaged building, grimaced and said: "Well, now I wonder what I've gone and done to my own oil stock. A fine thing."

Our flight charts aboard also had noted in rather unusual letters "Asahi Brewery" in Inchon itself. I remember how, during the briefings and de-briefings aboard, we often had tried to ease our own tension by arguing about the Asahi Brewery. Even if this brewery did contain concealed guns shouldn't we spare it? Who knows, we of *Sicily* might get ashore in Inchon sometime, and be thirsty. And we would argue along like that until the Asahi Brewery became more important to us in name than the big advertised breweries back home.

Yet here we were, actually on our way in to Inchon, and there was the "famous" Asahi Brewery on a hillside ahead of us. We already could see it. Or at least parts of the name. "Oh, woe on us this day for what we've done," said Capt. John Skorich, another Marine fighter pilot with us in the landing craft. For our canteens, of course, contained only ship's water. And today was to be a holiday.

## Chapter 22

SOMETHING BIG WAS IN THE MAKING AGAIN, AND WE wondered what. Maybe another amphibious invasion far north of the 38th Parallel. Maybe the invasion would be on the east coast of Korea this time. Maybe . . . maybe . . . maybe. . . .

Well, that is how landings get started, the same as rumors. Everything gets started with a maybe.

Ashore at Inchon, the rumors were really thick, and yet the landings at Inchon itself had been but a rumor not so many weeks before. Yet while we were hanging around trying to get a truck to take us as far inland as

Kimpo Airfield, and possibly even to Seoul, we were asked as many questions as we in turn threw out.

Perhaps the fact that we were attached to a carrier was assumed as a reason that we should know all secrets: past, present and future. Before leaving the carrier I had learned something, though, from Comdr. Red Gill who had the annoying habit of knowing everything in advance. If the information happened to concern me he would dish it out only with a hint—a sort of stand-by hint—and then grin that grin of his as a sentence-finisher, a period.

Red had not come in with us in the landing craft. He was due ashore later in a special shoreboat bringing in the body of the Marine sergeant, the plane mechanic who had been killed aboard by the accidental discharge of a plane's machine gun on the hangar deck. Red had stayed behind to serve as escort for the body.

Our departure in the landing craft at dawn had been so hurried that Red, while seeing us off at the gangway, merely had time to say in an undertone to me: "I got news for you—and may overtake you at Kimpo Field. If I do I'll bring your papers. That's all I can say at the moment. Good-by."

Now, hell, that could mean anything. And while my mouth was still open to ask for more of a hint, the land-craft already was underway, and taking my open mouth with it.

So now, here at Inchon, all of us finally piled into a

truck and were on our way to Kimpo. But I was still wondering. For yes, something new and big undoubtedly was in the making, at least in the planning stage in the Navy Headquarters in Tokyo. Was Red taking me back there to be in on it with him?

The idea began seeming more and more likely as the truck bounced and bumped its way along the dusty and bumpy road to Kimpo. What had been a terrible battlefield, all along this road not so many days previously, was now only the customary remnants of one. We came across a column of upset enemy tanks which our own fliers in the truck had destroyed by napalms and rockets.

"And look over there!" one flier would say to another while pointing. "And over there! And over there! Do you remember when you and I—" And they would go into their memories again of ferreting out enemy gun-nests, just ahead of our own Marine troops, and helping to destroy these nests all along the line to Kimpo and Seoul.

As for Kimpo Airfield itself, we of the *Sicily* even felt we held some kind of claim to it through priority. For one of our own fliers now in the truck, Lt. John Hanes, had been the first to land on Kimpo, and while the field was still under spasmodic fire. He had not known whether or not he should have landed on the field without permission, and so during his de-briefing afterwards in the readyroom he had tried to avoid mentioning what he had done.

But the rest of us aboard knew, and an hour or so be-

fore John himself had returned to the carrier. Some of the other fliers in John's own strike had watched him safely put down on the field after having engine trouble from an enemy bullet. They had returned aboard without John, but at the same time reported that he was safe and what he had done.

The first to land on Kimpo! And he had landed a Marine Corsair. At that time the Marines were still getting so little credit for what they did that we surely wallowed in triumph over this one, if merely among ourselves, we of the Navy included.

We waited for John, on his return to the *Sicily*, to tell us about the landing. But his de-briefing, as I mentioned, started out to be the shortest on record. He merely mentioned something about the target which had been assigned to him, what he had done or had not done to the target, and then he hurried and sat down.

Capt. Thach, who attended all the de-briefings of his pilots so that he could remain as close to their problems as possible, was as well aware of this Kimpo landing as the rest of us, and as equally as pleased. But now he kept a dead-pan, while waiting for the squadron leader to summon John back to the charts.

"Now what else did you do?" asked the squadron leader rather sternly. "Didn't I see you land on Kimpo?"

John hesitated, and then said: "Yes, Sir, I landed on Kimpo. But—but—but" And he started to give his reasons, but they were not very convincing. Besides, nobody

cared. He had been the first to land on Kimpo, and this was enough.

"So just for that," said Capt. Thach to John, "so just for that—I'm going to have a cake baked for you this very night."

Not only did John have the huge cake baked for him, as promised, but his plane was painted with the name "Kimpo 1."

\* \* \*

Yet all around us, as we continued bumping along on our way to Kimpo, and on the same road which eventually led to Seoul beyond, we kept seeing other personal reminders of the strikes from the *Sicily*.

"Look over there," Charley Garber said to John Skorich. "Remember, that's the place where the Gooks tried to imitate our own panels."

"Sure enough," answered John Skorich with a voice that was being bumped. "Sure enough."

And though Charley Garber's reference to "panels," and even to "Gooks," may sound slightly on the side of double-talk—except to people who have been in Korea—the words are very real indeed. In a liberal sense, or at least by the way Charley now meant the word, he was referring only to Korean enemy troops. Yet the word does have quite a few variations in regard to the Koreans themselves. The ROK Marines, for instance, also referred to their enemy Koreans as "Gooks." But the word does

have many reflective meanings in regard to Koreans as a whole, much depending on one's own mood and opinion while using the word.

As for the use of panels, during the close air-ground support, they were as necessary to our fliers as anything could be. Yet a panel in itself is quite a simple thing, being nothing more than an oblong piece of colored pasteboard or cloth. The choice of color is important, though, and it casts off a peculiar glow which the fliers could recognize from the air.

Our own troops would place these panels on the ground to indicate to the fliers the extent of the troops' position at any given moment, and not to attack anybody behind the panels. This was all right until the enemy got onto the idea and started to use similar panels also in an effort to fool the fliers. But unless the enemy had happened to have captured some of our own panels, the enemy could not imitate the peculiar glow which our own panels threw off. The code colors could be imitated, but not the glow.

As we continued bumping along, however, we were not as concerned with such technicalities as colored panels as we were concerned with our own memories. My own had been from recording the reports in the ready-room during the de-briefings. But each peculiarity of this peculiar terrain had been so well described in detail by the fliers, after having flown over it so many times in close air-ground support, that strangely I seemed to be seeing



structures and certain hillsides that I already had seen before. So I guess our minds can get like that.

In this regard I was especially anxious to see a hidden box-canyon into which a four-plane strike, led by "Rice Paddy" Reusser, had really pulled off a honey of a job one day. At the dead-end of the canyon, and on the cliff-side, he had spotted through the tall brush two huge caves. He had seen about three hundred enemy troops take concealment in these caves, something these same troops apparently had been doing right along. Whenever a plane came along the troops would run into the box-canyon and into these caves where the troops obviously must have felt as safe as could be.

"Rice Paddy" Reusser figured out a stunt of his own, and received permission from the ground-control to try it. He was going to try to throw a napalm bomb, which can burn up anything, into the mouth of the cave. The trouble with a napalm, though, is that it has no momentum force of its own, of course, other than the plane's own momentum releasing the napalm. That is one trouble in trying to throw a napalm into the mouth of a cave. Another trouble is that a napalm has to be dropped from a certain height in order to explode on contact with the ground. And Reusser would not have this height. For he would be flying low into the canyon, and with cliffs on each side of him, release the napalm at the cave, and then zoom up over the end of the box-canyon for his getaway.

Reusser did it, though. He dropped that napalm just where he wanted it to go. From his low altitude, virtually just clearing the bushes, he had not expected the napalm to explode, and it didn't. But as planned, Charley Garber, flying immediately behind, exploded the napalm with machine-gun fire, and then he zoomed up and over the end of the box-canyon too.

Well, that accounted for the enemy personnel in cave number one. And the other two fliers of the same strike did likewise, by following the same plan, with cave number two.

I asked "Rice Paddy" Reusser, while we were riding along, if I would get to see this box-canyon. He answered: "Maybe, but as you know, it's nearer to Seoul. And we're not even to Kimpo yet."

But we soon were in sight of Kimpo. At first sight of the mutilated hangars, somebody yelled to John Hanes, our hero-of-the-cake: "Hey, Johnny, there's *your* field. Can we visit it?"

"Yes," said Johnny generously.

## Chapter 23

COMDR. RED GILL HAD BEEN RIGHT. IN HARDLY ANY TIME at all, comparatively speaking, he and I were back in Tokyo to be in on the next amphibious invasion being planned.

What most impressed us now, after returning by air from Korea, was the seemingly cleanliness of Japan and the people. This had not impressed us before, but yet we had not had at that time so much of the contrast with Korea, especially with the people around Inchon and Seoul.

Almost everyone, on returning to Japan from Korea, undergoes much of this same impression. Or at least a lot of them talk about it, I just wonder how fair we were in passing such judgment. For the people of Korea surely had had a time of it, being knocked right and left by whoever came through, whether from the west or the north or the south.

It's strange how any of these Koreans could even have thought of washing their faces, let alone their clothes (if any were left)—but oddly we often had seen elderly Korean women in amazingly white dresses, and yet at the same time tramping through the rubble of what had once been their own little homes.

I couldn't get it, and still don't. So before passing judgment, I cannot help but wonder how some of our own borderline people must have appeared to any foreigner during our own Civil War.

The less I remember about Seoul, for instance, the better will my dreams be at night. Hordes of people, I do remember, but they were without roofs or purpose. And more people, with their packs and babies, kept streaming in all the time from across the Han River. They always moved in single file, usually along the dikes of the rice paddies, and these high dikes had the tendency to silhouette these weary and bent people against the sky line. For all of them were bent because of the loads on their backs.

One old woman, though, just seemed to give up as if saying: "What the hell." She wearily dropped her bundle of belongings onto the dike and sat there, as if fully intending to sit there forever and let the rest of the world go on. She had seen enough.

On the side of a craggy hill, virtually a small mountain, we saw the prison buildings, and the high walls surrounding these buildings, all of which had been a

stubborn pain in the neck to us back on the *Sicily* during the de-briefings. The prison contained concealed batteries aimed and waiting for our own troops moving in on Seoul. But also the prison was reported to contain, along with its other prisoners, a goodly number of American prisoners of war.

The problem up to our fliers was to try to locate these hidden batteries, by deliberately trying to be fired on, and leave the rest of the prison undamaged. This once again really called for some doing. But they tried it through the aid of a ground-control Marine, partly hidden with his radio among the rocks overlooking the prison yard. From his craggy cliff he could look down into the prison yard and see quite a few details, movements of people between the buildings, and so on, and he was so exceptionally smart in his radio directions to our fliers that they became quite fond of him.

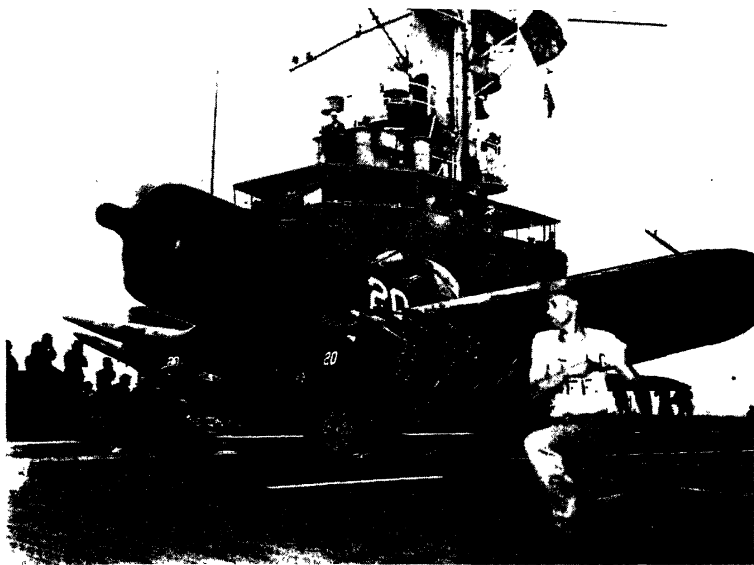
"Excellent," he would say up to them. "Excellent. Now next time try a few more feet to the right. A few more inches—"

But one time he was saying much the same as this when his voice suddenly stopped. Our fliers wondered what had occurred, but didn't know for several minutes until a different voice went on.

The new voice said: "Sorry for the delay, Goose Bumps." Goose Bumps still being the call-name for our planes, "but I'm the relief. Art has just been killed by a sniper."

So here at Seoul, as I say, we were looking up at this difficult prison which had caused us so much grief on the *Sicily*. As we looked we saw another column of prisoners being herded up the hill to the prison, this time by South Korean troops. The prisoners included women as well as men, and all of them seemed tired too. In fact, all of Korea seemed tired, even then, and too damned tired.

This may have been another reason, then, why we felt good being back in Japan, and if merely for a short while. And even if Red did say, while forking my endorsed papers over to me: "My hunch is, Miller, that our next landings will be at—oh, how it would surprise you—and now I'm going to get a haircut."



*Above:* Attached to the catapult on deck immediately forward this Corsair fighter is ready for take-off. The fighter is loaded with rockets and a five-hundred pound bomb. Aboard the

jeep-carrier *Sicily* off Korea. *Below:* Men wounded when U.S.S. *Brush* hit a mine off Korea. The wounded are transferred from U.S.S. *Brush* to U.S.S. *Worcester* at sea.

One frogman helping another to get into his underwater suit aboard the U.S.S. *Diachenko* at Wonsan.



Underwater demolitions team prepare to leave U.S.S. *Diachenko* to clear mine fields in Wonsan Harbor.







Perhaps the most remarkable navy action shot taken in the war, South Korean mine sweeper Number 512 was completely demolished from an enemy mine in Wonsan harbor. All that is left are the fragments in the air.



Underwater demolition men (frogmen) landing at Wonsan while helping to destroy mine fields.

## Chapter 24

THOUGH NOBODY YET HAS OFFICIALLY NAMED THE GAME as such, nevertheless the most famous pastime in Tokyo could be called: "Let's Go To The PX."

This massive Post Exchange Building, five or six stories high, is one of the reasons the folks back home have such trouble selecting the right gifts to send out to their military friends and relatives in Japan.

For almost anything that can be bought in the States can be bought in this Tokyo PX, and at prices which seem to me far less than the prices back home, although I am not a shopper.

Comdr. Fred Spencer is a shopper, however. He'll buy anything on any floor, and especially if he has somebody with him who is in a hurry to get away. With part of his combat photographic unit he also had returned to Tokyo from Korea to get ready for the next invasion. While he, Red Gill and I were riding in Fred Spencer's jeep to Navy Headquarters, Fred suddenly stopped the jeep near the PX and said: "Just a minute. I got to buy some-

thing in the PX. It'll only take me a second. Come on in with me. I'll be just a second."

That's the way it always starts with Comdr. Spencer. And Comdr. Red Gill, instead of sticking with me, turned traitor too by saying: "Good idea, Fred. I got to buy some toothpaste for my teeth."

"What the hell else would you buy it for?" I glowered at my superior officer, and reminded him once again that I was in a hurry to reach Navy Headquarters. But the jeep had been turned over to Comdr. Spencer for his own use while in Tokyo. He, the same as Red, seemed able to get about anything they wanted, and even though admirals might have to go without. I was never able to learn the trick, although I would copy the same phrases Red and Fred would use when they asked for anything. I would even try to copy their mannerisms, but instead of appearing persuasive I must instead have just appeared silly.

Anyhow, I had no jeep. And Fred quite wisely took his jeep keys with him when he entered the PX, and again repeating: "I'll just be a second."

And Red, not being too original this time, said: "Yeah, I'll just be a second too. Come on."

This command was meant for me, and so I obediently followed through the big doors of the PX. I had been in this PX before, of course, and so knew all the various things I could buy if I needed them. But I wasn't in need of a shave just then. Nor a piano. Nor a bag of golf clubs.

Nor a package of Bisquick. Nor a lady's hair-do. Nor a tricycle. Nor a civilian pair of pants. All I was in need of was to be on my way to Navy Headquarters.

Red immediately took the elevator to the fifth floor, and Fred immediately took the elevator to the third floor, and without first saying where we would meet, or without giving it a thought.

Crowds go to the PX not only because there is nowhere else to go to do that kind of shopping but also crowds like to go with crowds. The PX supposedly is limited to the military or semi-military or government employees. This was never fully straightened out in my mind, as I didn't bother to ask for all the details. Nor was it any of my concern. I wasn't running the place, I merely tried to avoid it—except when in need of something definite. Then the trick is to go alone, buy the thing if possible, and run.

My experiences, though, with PXs the world over have not always been what we might call the luckiest. After traveling some distance to get to them I usually hit them on the day they are closed for captain's inspection, or closed for inventory, or closed because the day happens to be their regular closed day of Monday, or Tuesday, or Wednesday, or Thursday, and so on. We never know in advance about these various closing peculiarities unless we happen to be based right there. But there is no use rapping on the door and saying: "Oh, please let me in anyhow. I've come a long distance."

Unlike a neighborhood store at home, I've never yet come across a PX which has indicated in any way that it cannot do without my trade.

Even this massive PX in Tokyo, for instance, contained everything except the one tiny item I needed. And this may have been why our silent feud first started: Tokyo PX versus Miller. I had needed a U. S. Navy insignie for the left side of my overseas cap. For these insignia were becoming rarer and rarer out there where we needed them the most, on our overseas caps for use aboard ship. The other kind of regular Navy caps were too likely to be blown off at sea unless we crammed them down around our ears, something which neither felt nor looked the best.

One of the last requests from aboard the *Sicily* had been for me to obtain Navy insignia in Tokyo and mail them back—after retaining one or two for myself, of course. Well, I had tried once in this PX. So now, while waiting for Fred and Red, I tried again—although I should have known better.

But I went to the floor which had showcases and showcases of insignia. There were insignia for the British Army, insignia for the Turkish Army, insignia for the Italian Army, insignia for the Air Force, insignia for the U. S. Army, insignia for the U. S. Army, insignia for the U. S. Army, and insignia for the U. S. Army.

"I want Navy insignia," I said to the clerk over the showcases. "You know, the kind we wear on our overseas caps."

"We haven't any," the clerk answered. "We can't get any because of the metal shortage."

I went away, then, and sat down again, still waiting for Fred and Red.

The crowds on all the floors were still playing the game of "Let's Go To The PX." Military wives, with their identification cards and babies, were really having a heigh-ho time of going from one display to another, and up the elevators and down again, and the wives no doubt would continue doing this until time to go home and get supper.

Men in all types of uniforms were having equally as good a time just roaming around from showcase to showcase, and occasionally buying some god-awful trinket they later would wonder what the hell to do with, or else buying something quite lavish, or else just buying in order to be doing something. For this might be their day off—and they had nowhere else to go.

While still waiting for Fred and Red, I watched one young soldier entertain himself by stepping on the weighing-machine next to me. He dropped in his coin, saw the things go around to record his weight. Then he went over to the bootblack stand, had his shoes shined, then he returned to the weighing-machine and weighed himself again. I could not quite figure it all out. But, then, there were a lot of things I could not quite figure out, namely where was Comdr. Red Gill and where was Comdr. Fred Spencer?

I had gone through almost a whole package of cigarettes before I finally saw either one of my superior officers. He was Fred, and he came running up to me and said: "Where's Red? We got to go now. I'm late." And then, without waiting to hear my own feelings on the same subject, he ran off again to another department in the PX.

I remained seated, and next to a mother who was having difficulty with her bundles of bundles and also with her little angel-faced daughter who had just wet her pants on the chair. And Red arrived with five sacks of purchases.

"Hi," Red called out happily. "Seen anything of Fred?"

I tried to choose my words carefully before answering. But during the lapse of time required for this, Red jubilantly spoke out first: "Here, you hold these," he said. "I'll go try to find Fred. I'll bet he's up on the fourth floor."

So, before I could say anything, Red was gone again.

This PX fever is a dangerous thing, somewhat mindful of an elaborate St. Vitus dance, and there is no inoculation for it. While Red disappeared up one elevator, Fred descended in another. It was so neatly done, and so sudden, that the two could have been counterweights.

"Red's been here," I told Fred quite calmly, and so calmly that I even surprised myself. "He's gone up to look for you."



"Damn it," said Fred, handing me his purchases to hold. "Why didn't you tell him to wait? Doesn't he know I'm late?"

I didn't answer. One of the purchases in my lap was a toy train of cars. But whether they belonged to Fred or to Red I didn't know by now. I merely held them.

Fred said: "Well, if he comes back you tell him to wait."

But again I didn't answer. For Fred already was on his way to where he said the soap was. It was being rationed at that time at so many bars a week per person, but he had obtained a ration card from somewhere, and had waved it towards me in passing.

The angel-faced little girl reached over and tried to touch the toy train of cars I was holding. But I guarded them with my life by pulling them out of her reach. This was the least I could do, I thought, for Fred or for Red during their great attack of PX sickness.

Towards five o'clock, an announcement came over the loud-speaker that the main doors would be closed in fifteen minutes. But I didn't care about that either. I didn't care about anything anymore.

## Chapter 25

WE SOON WOULD BE SHOVING AGAIN BACK TO KOREA. WE knew when but not exactly where, other than that the invasion was being planned for far north of the 38th Parallel. Probably at Wonsan on the east coast. But that part of it was still indefinite. Besides, it was better not to know too much.

Many of us of the Navy were now billeted in the Sanno Apartments, a strange building of four stories and three separate wings, and made to order for getting lost in. But by now I was so accustomed to becoming lost wherever I went in Tokyo that the sensation no longer had any news value to me, and so I'll stop mentioning it.

Yet Tokyo, after all, is an astonishingly flat city for its great size, and has few distinguishing landmarks for getting one's bearings in case of need. I could, for instance, have used a few Washington Monuments, but Tokyo, alas, doesn't have any. And one street not only

looks the same as the next street but usually can also run right into it without bothering much about changing names.

However, the Japanese police who direct traffic at intersections are magnificent as they stand on their lofty boxes. Each policeman, with his white gloves and whistle, is always a one-man ballet worth watching. But he is not there for guiding lost people, of course, because he does not have time for it. Besides, the whistle is always in his mouth and always serving as his own musical accompaniment for the graceful waving of his arms. He doesn't point harshly. But rather with the sway of his body and his arms, he performs a sort of Isadora Duncan dance, even for an ox-cart.

Although I always could admire these intersection traffic policemen I never felt equally up to appealing to them for directions. There was a reason for this. He probably would try to answer me through his whistle, thereby making us both as bad off as before we started. Or worse, for traffic by now would have started to pile up.

Because I was always getting lost in Tokyo, even while trying to go for some simple walk outside the Sanno Apartments, I conscientiously did try to learn some useful phrases from a Japanese-American-speaking dictionary. In case of being lost I did want to learn, for example, such simple phrases as "Where the hell am I? Who am I? And where the hell am I trying to go?"

Phrases like these might be of some help, but in my Japanese-made dictionary I couldn't find them. I did find some others, though, including how to say in Japanese:

"Halt! Lie down, Madam! The U.S. Government will reward you!"

The one advantage, however, in not being a natural linguist like some people I know, including Capt. Walter Karig, is that I've now reached the point where I can be stupid without feeling any pain or shame about it. And that's a gift too. If beautiful Japanese women want to talk to me so that I can understand what they are saying, let them make the effort, and I'm agreeable to listen.

From the three little Japanese girls, though, who took care of our floor in our wing of the Sanno Apartment, I did learn one Japanese word. They kept referring to me, and rather sweetly I thought, as "*Agisan*" (pronounced "*Ogison*"), and when finally I asked what it meant, the three of them giggled in unison and answered "Grandfather."

But for a country like Japan which on a big scale has looted and robbed so many other countries, including Korea, what always amazed me at first—until I got used to it—was the supreme honesty of the individual Japanese with whom we dealt or who had dealings with us.

We may just have been fortunate of course, in our selection of people. Nor were we in big business. Yet

around our billeted rooms in the Sanno Apartment, for instance, we could dump the money contents of our pockets upon dressers or tables, or anywhere we liked, after coming home at night. And we might forget to pick up all this paper stuff while hurrying to work in the morning.

We had keys to the doors, but at least in the case of Red and Fred and me these keys were far and away too much trouble to use. I think the same was true with almost everybody else we knew there, once they became accustomed to it. For we of the Navy as well as of the Army were always running in and out of each other's rooms on errands, or to find something somebody suddenly needed down at headquarters, and whether anybody was in the room or not. And so the use of our keys would simply be a nuisance if we troubled to use them.

Besides, in the daytime we usually would be down at headquarters working while our rooms were being cleaned and made up by the Japanese help. And yet on our return to the rooms the money we had left so sloppily scattered around would be arranged in neat little piles, and perhaps with a weight of some sort placed on them.

"My three girls"—and I selfishly will call them that, although they worked for the whole wing too—were so anxious to keep everything in the room just right, and at the same time were so swift and pleasant about it,

that my main difficulty was trying to find a way to thank them. I didn't know what kind of wages they received, although the wages couldn't have been very much; nevertheless, I tried handing them Japanese money at first. But the gesture seemed to confuse them, as it would have confused me, too, between friends.

So finally I said: "Well, lookit. What is there I can get you at the PX? What is it you would like the most?"

They looked at each other but remained silent. So again I pressed the point: "Come on. You can talk English. Tell me."

Whereupon, when they saw I was really serious, they went into their famous giggling huddle again, talked it out between themselves in Japanese, and finally reached a decision. But once the decision was made, the spokesman stepped forward, and suddenly as serious now as if about to give a graduation address. Also, in her little white dress and white shoes (tennis shoes actually) she looked the part of somebody in a graduation exercise.

"Sir—Sir—*Agisan*," she began, her voice assuming all the gravity of the world, "if you really mean what you say we really would like something—" Then she hesitated.

"Yes, yes, what is it?" I prodded. "Don't be so long telling me. You're really not that bashful."

"Sir," she started all over again, "if—if—if you don't mind, we'd—we'd—we'd like some—cookies."

Then, her overwhelming statement having been pro-

nounced at last, she ran back to her companions and hid herself behind them.

Of course after that I did begin to learn what Japanese women and girls prefer the most as gifts. At least, at that particular time. But even these wishes can vary with the seasons, I suppose, like with everything else. But at that time—and aside from those crazy cookies—the wishes were for soap, small bottles of perfume or toilet water, and lipsticks.

“My Three Girls” were not being paid by the Sanno Apartment to look out for our personal belongings, such as doing our laundry. For the apartment had its own laundry desk for handling our clothes to be cleaned. But “My Three Girls” took it upon themselves to wash such things as our socks or whatever could be washed with the limited facilities the girls had to work with in our apartment wing. I would return to the room from work and find a whole clothesline of things stretched across the windows to dry.

Yet the word “clothesline” is wrong here too, for it consisted of little pieces of strings which the girls had salvaged and tied together.

Once “My Three Girls” hinted that they had another big request of me, the spokesman going through the same suffering ordeal as before. But the mammoth request this time turned out to be for a can of shoe-polish if I could get one at the PX.

As for having my shoes polished, or even polishing

them myself, I always seem to forget about it. The girls must have been aware, even more than I was, that no Navy man should walk around in the type of neglected shoes I was wearing. Anyhow, after I got the shoe-polish, supposedly as a gift for the girls, it turned out to be for use on me.

Another specific example of honesty—because I do dislike generalities—occurred late one night after Capt. Karig, Comdr. Red Gill and I had been eating a Japanese dinner in a tiny Japanese place far away from where we lived. The tiny place was so small it didn't even have a name, but it was a combination place which sold both food and beer.

The place was strictly native, and so we ate with our shoes off, of course, and while squatting on the floor. After Red and I returned to the Sanno Apartment from the dinner—and the time must have been around one in the morning—Red discovered that he had lost his wallet.

Red had not been to this little restaurant previously, nor did the family which ran it know him. But they had seen Capt. Karig once or twice before, and must have learned somehow where he stayed, the Imperial Hotel.

While Red and I were still wondering about the wallet, and how to locate the little place (for my directions in Tokyo were still bad), Capt. Karig entered Red's room, tossed the wallet on the bed, and said, "Here you are."

The family, on finding Red's wallet on the floor among



the matting, and an hour or so after we had gone, had delivered the wallet by taxi the long distance to the Imperial. They had left it there with the desk clerk, in Capt. Karig's name, and then departed. And also had departed, because of the price of that taxi, all the family's profits from our evening.

FOOTNOTE: Naturally, before Red and I left again for Korea we did locate the little place and repaid the family, plus some gifts we thought the kids of the family might like.

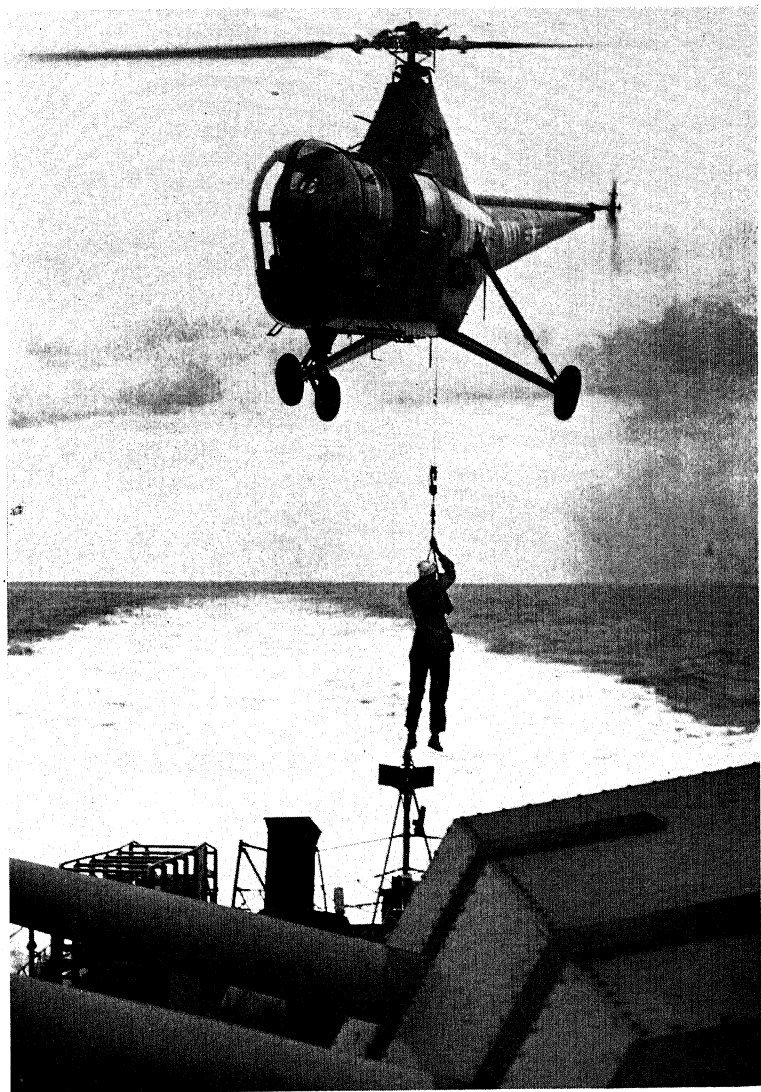
But surprisingly the family was so touched that as many members of the family as could pile into the taxi came to see us off on our last night—and the return fare the family insisted on handling.

So obviously we couldn't win, neither could the little family.

## Chapter 26

WE HAD NO ANIMALS ABOARD THE *Mount McKinley*. Otherwise we might have considered ourselves something of a Noah's Ark the day we sailed from Inchon, on the west coast of Korea, to go all around to Wonsan, north of the 38th Parallel on the east coast. The next amphibious landings would be made at Wonsan—if that fantastically mined harbor could be cleared in time. We didn't know.

But we did know that aboard the *Mount McKinley*, our amphibious flagship, we seemed to live in layers and that we comprised something of everything and of everybody. We had Army, Navy, Marines, and a host of correspondents. We seemed to have everything, in fact, except much room.

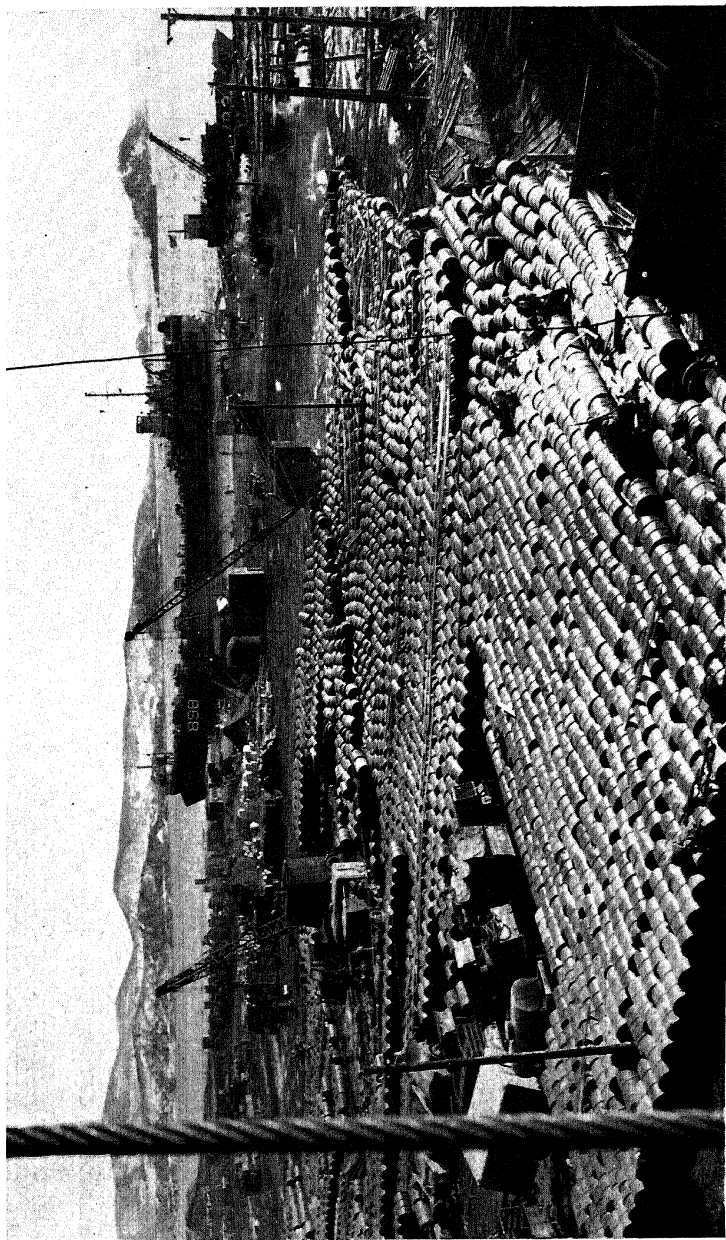


Helicopter takes a crewman from a destroyer at sea via hoisting cable.

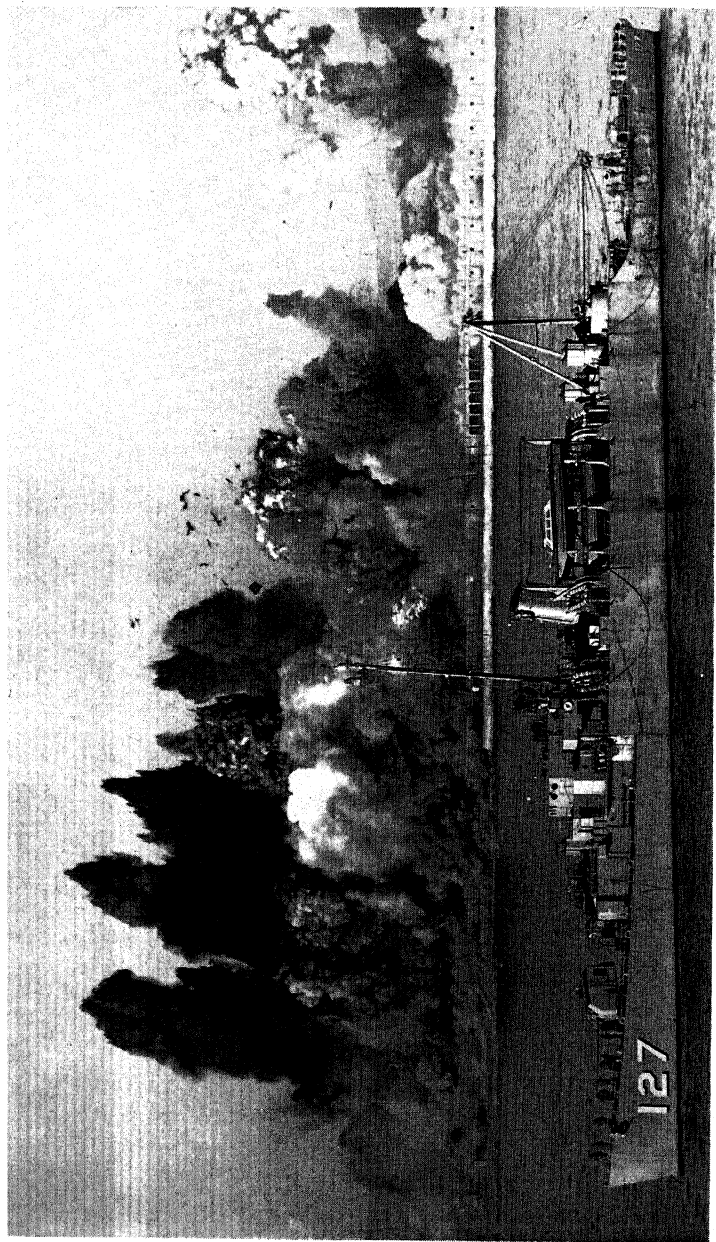


*Above:* Lt. (JG) M. D. Taylor is on guard against the advancing enemy during a rescue by a navy helicopter next to enemy territory.

*Below:* Injured personnel being brought aboard the U.S.S. *Manchester* by helicopter.



A navy LST stands by in the harbor at Hungnam to evacuate personnel and supplies from the port city.



A navy demolition team, last ones to leave the beachhead, were responsible for these explosions marking the end of the evacuation at Hungnam.

Maj. Gen. Edward M. Almond and his huge staff of the 10th Army Corps were aboard. So was Maj. Gen. Oliver P. Smith and his staff of the First Marines. And so was Rear Adm. James H. Doyle, who had the smallest staff of all comparatively and yet the *Mount McKinley* was his flagship for the amphibious operations. Anyhow, because of so many staffs we were a long time figuring out who were members of the staffs and who were members of the ship's company. And we were a long time figuring out too where all of us were going to sleep.

Many of us, to join the flagship just prior to her sailing, had been flown from Japan to the airport which serviced Inchon, this airport being the familiar Kimpo, about an hour or so away by truck. We may have been bright-eyed enough on arriving, but after boarding the *Mount McKinley*, I for one began to feel like a haunted man.

Usually I can catch on to a strange vessel quite quickly, her various passageways and ladders and all. Most Navy vessels do have a certain similarity, a certain pattern. But I never did learn the whole of the *Mount McKinley*, and this was partly due to the many people aboard.

I would start down one passageway, for instance, trying to figure out where I was going. But before I could turn around, or change my mind as to directions in the narrow passageways, somebody was sure to be right behind me and I would have to keep right on going—

even if the course led smack into some general's quarters and a secret conference.

The regular crew of the *Mount McKinley* had become habituated, of course, to the various decks and ladders. Or at least I presume the members of the crew knew their way around by now. My most humiliating experience could have been perhaps while I was trying to find my way down a strange passageway to reach a certain ladder which I thought was there, and which ultimately might lead me to where I wanted to go.

This was all right, except that a mess cook, carrying a huge garbage can, was immediately behind me each inch of the way, and tracking me step for step, and turn for turn. I couldn't turn back because of the size of that garbage can. My pride would not allow me, as a Navy officer, to admit to the boy that I was completely lost—and on a Navy vessel. All I could do was to keep on going, as if being herded by that garbage can, and yet at the same time try to pretend that I was not being herded at all but knew exactly what I was doing. Navy officers' manuals do not take care of a situation of that sort, even if I had had one to read at the moment (which I hadn't), and so I just kept on going ahead of the garbage can.

Ultimately our course ended—or rather the boy's course ended—at a garbage-disposal chute on a weather deck aft. But out of pride I just kept on going as if something at the stern needed my attention desperately. Maybe the propeller. Anyhow, after having been herded



almost as far aft as I could be herded, I now assumed my most efficient officer's look while peering thoughtfully over the side to inspect—absolutely nothing—until the boy finished dumping the garbage. Then we both returned back into the passageway, but with him and his can in the lead this time.

Those of us who had been the last to board the *Mount McKinley* at Inchon were also the last to be billeted in any remaining space at all. This was only natural, and most of us were assigned folding cots in staterooms already overcrowded. The little stateroom to which I finally was assigned at midnight already contained three regular bunks which certainly were enough for the size of the stateroom. So my heart bled a little, though not literally, for the three regular members of the ship's company who occupied these bunks when—at midnight—my own folding cot was unceremoniously set up in the remaining space.

What was I supposed to say under such circumstances? To apologize would be a bit out of order as I had had nothing to do with it. After having flown from Japan, I did want to catch some sleep, no matter where. But after I had turned in, another cot was brought in too. How it was ever set up within the few remaining inches is still a miracle. Yet part of this cot was left suspended and part of it was resting on my own, and a correspondent-photographer climbed onto this suspended cot and said: "Jesus—a magic carpet."

This correspondent-photographer, with all his photographic gear, decided to leave the *Mount McKinley* before we sailed for Wonsan. In this matter he could have been wise, for he had a hunch that the North Korean capital of Pyongyang might fall to our troops before the *Mount McKinley* ever reached Wonsan, and he wanted to be ashore for the action.

Everything was confused, and remained that way. For even Wonsan, on the other side of Korea, had just been taken by our own troops moving up north-by-east on land. So we were beginning to wonder why have an amphibious landing at Wonsan at all? Or maybe our three staffs aboard suddenly would receive word to go some other place. We didn't know. We could only guess.

Meanwhile my three roommates in the crowded state-room didn't take long getting to know about me. Or at least about my cot. Each time they jumped out of their bunks in the darkness to go on watch at night my cot was always there. And especially was this true the first night when everything wrong seemed to happen, including a man falling overboard.

"Man overboard! Man overboard!"

One of my roommates, as I was to learn later, was a deep-sea diver in addition to other qualifications. Whether or not this had anything to do with him automatically being summoned to deck at the call of "Man Overboard!" I didn't know then, and still don't. But anyhow he was summoned that first night from heavy sleep,

and naturally he sprawled all over me and the cot while trying to turn on a light, and this is how we were first introduced. We were introduced with a "Dammit! What's this!"—the "what's this" being me.

The man who had fallen overboard was saved easily enough, as by yet we were not underway from Inchon. We were several days at sea after that, and en route to Wonsan, before I finally came to know my roommates. Nor do I blame them. For that cot of mine, occupying all the comparative space it did, was like some terrible trap of pointed sticks each time my three roommates leaped out for their night watches. The three were always leaping, though not in unison.

I promised them that as soon as I could I would try to make up for all the inconvenience—and leg wounds—I was causing them. But I never really did, although their names are Chief Carpenter Paul T. Waltz; Chief Boatswain Orval Wise; and young Ensign William Naylor.

So to them, even on this late date and seal, both my cot and I apologize.

## Chapter 27

EACH DAY AND EACH NIGHT, AS OUR AMPHIBIOUS flagship, the *Mount McKinley*, continued rounding the coast of Korea for the harbor of Wonsan, we kept receiving more and more reports of how really mined with Russian mines was this harbor of Wonsan.

No channel as yet had been swept through these mine fields so that we could enter, or that landings could be made without God-awful risk to each craft. In trying to clear a channel in advance for us, two of our own mine-sweepers, the *Pirate* and the *Pledge*, already had been destroyed by mines. Also a ROK sweeper had been sunk, and an ROK supply ship.

These daily reports we would receive aboard the *Mount McKinley* as we cruised along, sometimes within sight of the mainland itself and sometimes within sight of only islands. For Korea surely has a lot of islands, and all of them appear about alike, jagged and lofty and somewhat bleak.

Our crowded days aboard, then, were spent in briefings and in trying to keep out of each other's way. But staff meetings were going on all the time, either the Army staff or the Marine staff or the Navy staff, or possibly representatives from all three together, and in direct proportion to the reports being received from Wonsan.

A wardroom aboard a vessel is usually a place to sit down for a while when momentarily off duty, have some coffee, and talk about things. Or else pick up some old magazine (for all of them are old in a wardroom), and mind one's own business until time to return to duty again. But the wardroom of the *Mount McKinley* was not exactly like that. At least during this cruise, because all passageways seemed to lead through the wardroom, and somebody was always entering to look for somebody else.

One of the forward doors, being in a sort of windfunnel from off a weather deck, would slam shut on its own accord between each entrance or departure. The effect on our ears was like living constantly on a rifle range, and with each sharp report of that slamming door we would all glance up quickly, and almost as if trying to make sure whether we were being shot or not.

Because we could not yet try to get through the mine fields of Wonsan, we cruised rather slowly, stalling for time and for more reports. So our evenings in the wardroom would be the most crowded of all. For unless on duty at the time we had nowhere else to be. A motion picture would be shown each night in the wardroom, but after glancing at a few of them I never did learn just why.

The screen would be set up over the mess tables in the middle of the wardroom, and we would look at the picture from all sides and angles, some of us looking at the picture from in front of the screen and most of us looking from behind it. This was all right, except that those of us behind the screen would have to read everything backwards. Also all the actors would be left-handed, and if they were acting a military scene their badges would be on the wrong side of their jackets.

None of us commented about this, however. We merely took it all in silence. We would be in everybody's way while trying to find something in the darkness to sit on or perch on, and I doubt if many of us could ever see the entirety of the screen at once. But even this made no difference. For the films sent out for use at sea are usually the kind which can be lost or sunk without any great loss to the world of art. Their sole value must have been in their age—since age is said to have a value.

We of the Navy cannot help but compare one vessel with another. The game becomes instinctive with us. So now I could not help but remember the *Sicily's* hangar

deck where pictures likewise had been shown at night. We had thought the hangar deck, with all its stowed planes, or with planes under repair, had been crowded enough. As indeed the deck was. Yet aft on this hangar deck, and near the aft elevator, there always seemed to be room enough for everyone off duty who wished to see the pictures at night.

During our many strikes from the *Sicily*, however, we had learned to keep our personal emotions so much under control that on certain nights of a picture show we would enact a far more unbelievable scene than any being shown on the screen. For example, each time we lost a flier or any other of our people, a memorial service would be held aboard for him. The chaplain, standing on the elevator, would conduct the services in the evening. He would stand behind a little folding pulpit which had specially been brought out for this purpose.

The chaplain may have been conducting the services for the closest friend some of us may have had aboard ship. For all of us strangely seemed exceptionally close to each other, we had been together aboard the carrier so long. We knew each other's mannerisms so well that, although we might argue at times in an unofficial way, nevertheless the loss of a person, his mannerisms and all, was a loss to all of us, and whether we were enlisted members of the flight-deck crews or officers on the bridge.

But the strange thing was how through experience we

had learned to engineer our emotions the way we did. In the evening of a memorial service we could listen to the service being conducted on the elevator area. After the service was ended we could turn our folding chairs around to the opposite direction to face the screen, and wait for the start of the picture which immediately was to follow.

We ourselves were often baffled by our ability to do this, and we frequently discussed it, for we were not hard. And Ken "Rice Paddy" Reusser, who literally had seen so many of his own fellow pilots and friends get it—because he had accompanied them down as far as he could go—was the one who once said to me after a death: "I'm really frightened at myself, Max, for being able to take these things the way I'm now doing. Yes, I'm really frightened at myself."

This may have been an odd way of putting it, but the meaning certainly was clear. So on with the picture show! For it obviously could not catch up with our own reality anyhow and regardless of the leads or the story.

Aboard the *Mount McKinley*, however, the real picture show would have been a picture show of the show itself going on in such comparatively tight quarters, and with the spectators trying to get a squint from all directions around the screen. At night, and while cruising with darkened ship outside, we hardly could get away from the picture even if we had wanted to—and at times we certainly did want to.



Our crowded staterooms were hardly the place to seek concealment or to try to read. People off watch would be sleeping preparatory to going on watch, and so naturally they didn't want the lights on. We could try to sleep too, but would be awakened by the people coming off watch. And so our days and nights went on like that—while approaching the mine fields of Wonsan.

## Chapter 28

TWO ODD LITTLE BIRDS—THEY COULD HAVE BEEN KOREAN sea sparrows—attached themselves to our vessel the morning we started to move slowly through the enemy mine fields into the outer harbor of Wonsan. We thought the birds were quite silly to have done this, but they played and hopped around the aft weather deck, and we fed them crumbs.

A narrow course had been charted ahead for us by minesweepers, and at intervals of a half-mile or so would be marker-buoys with flags on them. This meant that as many mines as possible had supposedly been cleared from this winding lane the *Mount McKinley* was expected to follow. Yet we knew by now that every type of Russian-made mine, varying from contact mines to influence mines, had been placed or haphazardly dumped in the waters of Wonsan.

This meant, among other things, that undetected mines could explode after a number of crossings had been made over them. Also it meant that we were all wearing—or else carrying under our arms—life jackets of any description available, and style made no difference.

The two little birds had no life jackets, though, nor did they have to stand any lookout watch over the rail. All they did was to continue hopping around, pecking at the crumbs, and perhaps wondering how solemn human mortals could possibly get.

Our progress through those waters was so slow and cautious that at times we hardly seemed underway. We were accompanied by two small landing crafts, one of which ironically was a hospital landing craft with stretchers and all, including two medical attendants who kept looking up at us, though not exactly eagerly. But the Red Cross was on their helmets, and the Red Cross was on the side of their craft, and they remained at a distance off our stern quarter, and just following along.

But the second little craft continued busy all over the place, sometimes off our bow, sometimes dead ahead, and investigating everything which came in sight, whether a piece of driftwood or just a suspicious idea. Once we came to a complete stop, almost going in reverse, while waiting for the small craft to investigate something—which later turned out to be a watersoaked boat-cushion. And another time, a part of a box.

Everything of this nature was picked up by the small craft and stowed away. This gesture was for the benefit of any vessel which might follow us later. For the real convoy of Marines and other troops was not to enter the harbor until the mines got cleaned up better—whenever that would be. The number of mines off Wonsan was estimated as being anywhere from 2,000 to 4,000, or the number could go on indefinitely, as nobody had any way of really knowing. No pattern of their planting had been discovered or captured. The belief at the time was that the Russians simply had dumped the works, and had gone away. For we were in North Korea now.

As we continued slowly moving along we began to love the *Mount McKinley* more and more. It would be a shame to have her blow up, and especially without advance notice. For this is one of the main differences between the sensation of going through mine fields and the sensation of being under gunfire or aerial attacks. They at least give a slight advance warning of the immediate future. Also, they have some noise and some thunder ahead of time. But we had none of this. If *it* happened it would happen all at once, from complete silence to whatever the hell the racket would be.

Maybe all of us aboard the *Mount McKinley*, instead of just waiting and watching as we were doing, should have gone around beating on tinpans. I don't know. But I do know that the crumbs we tossed for the two birds didn't make enough sound when the crumbs hit the deck.

Kid sailors, though, are wonderful. The crew around me next to the rail of the aft deck soon began telling lies. For an unusually wet mist, almost a rain, was closing in on us now as we crept along. This mist, along with an increasing chop to the sea, was not helping for visibility. But we had not yet reached the location in the outer harbor where we could anchor. We had to keep going, and this is when the lies began.

A young sailor next to me started telling another sailor, though softly at first, all about San Francisco, and how the young sailor (the one doing the talking) had virtually needed the help of police to rescue him from a rich apartment occupied by a rich woman with "so many God damn rich furs that she even used the God damn rich furs for nightgowns—whenever she wore any God damn nightgown."

The rich woman, of course, had pleaded with the young sailor to marry her and that he "wouldn't have to work another God damn day in my life, she said." The young sailor replied, however, that he had to report back for duty at Alameda. But this rich woman said she could fix all that, and how she knew the commanding officer, and how he was a close relative of hers.

"But hell," the young sailor nobly concluded to the other sailor, "who wants to get married to a dame as rich as that? I don't. Christ no."

The older sailor, as it turned out in the conversation, seemed to have had to undergo the same hard decisions.

Only in his case, there were three of them, all similarly rich and all living in Boston. "But by God if we get through this damn mine field, and I ever get back to Boston, I may make up my mind then. Look, do you want to see a picture of one of them? She's the richest."

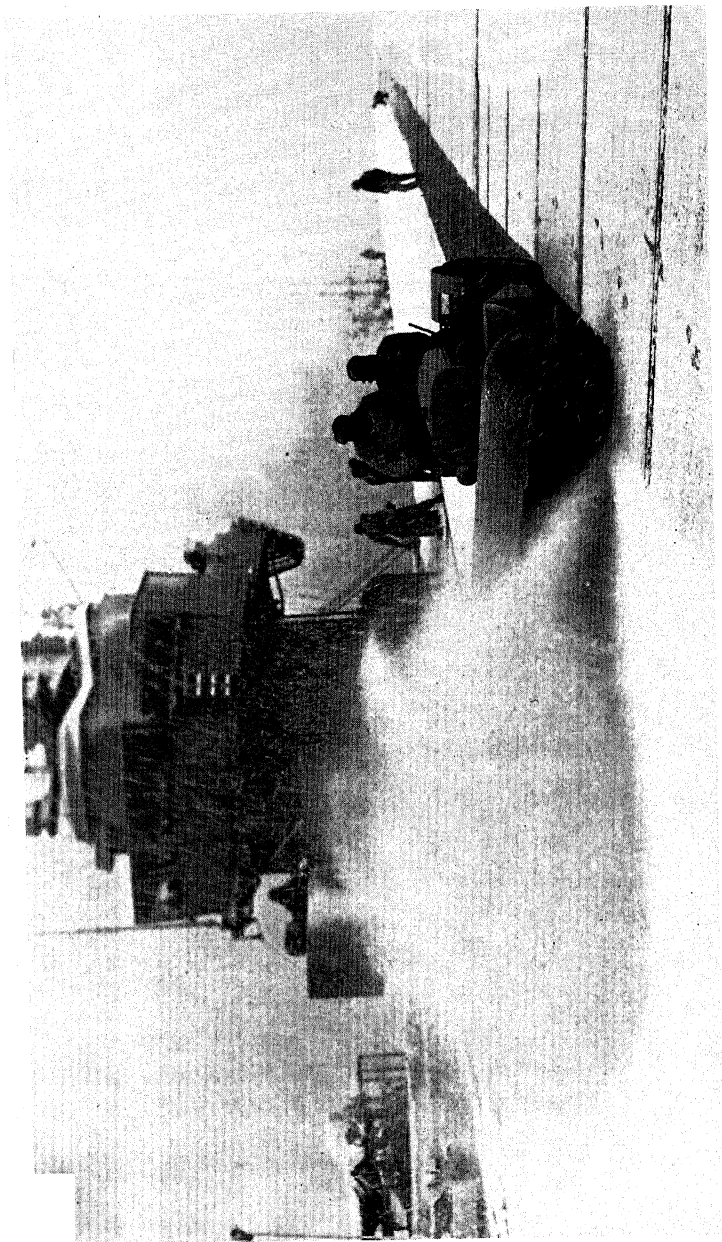
Opening his wallet—and I couldn't help but see, for I think I was expected to see—this older sailor displayed a tinted photograph of a girl of about twenty years old, and with all her front teeth showing in a cheery smile. But her hair-do was equally as fascinating, being a symmetrical design of tight-set waves and curls which seemed hardly dry when the photograph was taken.

"So God damn her, and such a rich little bitch," said the sailor, affectionately closing his wallet, and looking back out at sea again. Then, as an afterthought, the sailor soberly added: "Her old man owns part of a railroad, and he wants me to go in business with him."

By now, as we still cruised carefully along, we had become rather accustomed to the sight of the Red Cross craft following us. Also the sight of each floating piece of debris no longer necessarily meant for sure that a mine was concealed beneath, and even though we had been warned in advance that the trick was a common one used by the enemy in concealing mines around here. The stuff on the surface could appear so innocent. Nor did we ourselves allow anything floatable to be thrown overboard. Even our empty cans, before being heaved over the side, would be punched with holes to make them sink immediately.



Winter aboard the U.S.S. *Philippine Sea* off Korea.



Using a snowplow aboard the jeep carrier U.S.S. *Badoeng Strait* to sweep ice and snow from the flight deck.



Our two little birds were so overfed by now, and so accustomed to us by now, that they merely sat around on deck and without even troubling themselves to get out of our way.

Then suddenly came the call to drop anchor, and down it went, the chain rattling with the depth, and with our engines momentarily in reverse accordingly.

"Oh, wouldn't it be lovely," somebody said, as we listened to that chain go down. "Oh, wouldn't it be just what we needed—if that anchor hit *something* NOW!"

Our cruise of the day was over, but we were not through with the mines though.

## Chapter 29

WE WERE BEGINNING TO THINK THAT THE KOREAN WAR would be cleaned up soon. Even most of the correspondents aboard were beginning to think this, and some were wondering where they would be sent next. Maybe to French Indo-China.

Our amphibious flagship, the *Mount McKinley*, had moved from the outer harbor to the inner harbor of Wonsan now. Even within here the seas remained pitching so wildly that our shore boats were continuously being smashed.

The convoy of Marine and Army troops was still outside, cruising back and forth, killing time until enough mines were cleaned up in the harbor for the big landing crafts to enter, and for the troops to be disembarked.

There was no hurry, for this part of the coast already was ours.

We thought how lucky we were that things had moved so swiftly in our favor. For if there had had to have been a real D-day at Wonsan, as originally planned, the high seas and the mines would have turned any attempted landings into a catastrophe.

Unlike at Inchon, with its enormous change of tides, the tides at Wonsan were negative. We had figured on this in advance as being a fortunate deal. But we had no way of figuring in advance, of course, that the seas at Wonsan suddenly would become so mad at us, and at everything we tried to launch. At Inchon, despite its tides, the sea had remained calm throughout all the landings.

So, yes, we had reason to believe that luck was on our side, both at Inchon and at Wonsan, and probably would remain that way. For the troops not only could take their time about landing here at Wonsan, and would not have to land under enemy gunfire, but we also had discovered hidden sandbars offshore which, along with the high seas, really would have wrecked the works.

Some of the correspondents and most of the head staff members already had left the *Mount McKinley* to be on shore. But other correspondents preferred to remain aboard for at least a while longer, and to see what gave with information. For the northern capital of Pyongyang (which we simply referred to as "Ping-pong" and let it

go at that) already had been taken while we had been at sea, and so everything seemed right with the world. With our world, anyhow.

Correspondents, though, have a professional habit of wishing they could be everywhere at once. Some thought they should have been at "Ping-pong" instead of at Wonsan, and some thought they already should be heading for what at that time seemed to be the next big stuff coming up, French Indo-China. And some thought they would wait until the troops officially came ashore, and then see what their editors wanted after that.

I mention all this just to show the psychology at the time, and how Korea was likely not to make any more big news, but just repetition. Our Intelligence was furnished us by the Army, and we were under the Army. Meanwhile we also were still anchored among enemy mine fields. And we had to look out for them ourselves.

Perhaps a minesweeper resembles a tugboat too much to be ever glorified on Christmas calendars. Yet a minesweeper carries such a majesty of fate with her, as she trawls back and forth over her given course, that I often wonder why a minesweeper could not be enshrined somewhere as a symbol to all of us to accept what comes.

We did not have any too many minesweepers left at Wonsan because, as mentioned before, the toll on them had been terribly heavy even before the *Mount McKinley* arrived there. But if the harbor was to be opened as a supply-by-sea base for the First Marines moving north,

and for the 10th Corps moving north, then the remaining minesweepers would just have to keep on doing what they were doing all around us, and especially between us and the beach.

In talking with the men of the minesweeping crews I never did learn their psychology. And I failed, I suppose, because I could not possibly put myself in their place or think like they did. Back and forth they systematically would trawl, back and forth all day long, each minesweeper working over her own given pattern, and just waiting for something to explode—and to explode preferably behind them.

Once, while some of us were going ashore in a small landing craft, we counted three explosions while on the way in. We were not as far from the minesweepers as we would like to have been at the time. But there was no help for it, and their trawling gear extended a good many yards, nor did we especially want to get tangled up in any of this trawling gear. It was usually marked at the end by an apparatus which cut through the water like a fin. We could see this on the surface, but we could not always see the trawling line.

"Whoopsadaisy! There goes one," we said, when the first mine went off at a considerable distance on our starboard. But the next two were not as far away, and so we stopped saying "whoopsadaisy."

Yet the good old faithful helicopters (alias egg beaters, alias mixmasters, alias whirligigs, alias whirldigirdies)

were as helpful with mines as the helicopters had been with everything else in this strange war.

The helicopters, being able to fly in their hesitatingly peculiar manner, were used for spotting mines, even beneath the surface. The spotter would drop a marker, and then notify either the Navy's underwater demolition crews or else a minesweeper, much depending on the circumstances.

Also these helicopters, by taking off from the Battleship *Missouri*, anchored outside of Wonsan, could get necessary people ashore in a hurry, and thereby ignore the mines altogether. But as usual we still didn't have enough helicopters, and by the way things looked we never would have enough to meet the demand. For this war, or any future war, wasn't supposed to have been this kind of a war. Things were supposed to have been dropped from great distances by great planes, and that would be the end of it.

Because of the choppy seas and the winds we were having during the first few days, even within the harbor, there was always the pleasant possibility too of underwater mines breaking free from their fastenings and floating at night to where we preferably would not want them to float.

The Boatswain, after returning from watch and getting ready to turn in, was asked about this problem, and if he could rig up a big net for catching these mines if they came floating towards the *Mount McKinley*. He was

paring his toenails on the edge of his bunk while thinking of the question. And he kept saying: "But how can I make a net for catching mines, and without any material aboard for making the net . . ." and he kept paring his toenails while still thinking.

I had no answer, so said nothing, but just kept on watching him pare away.

## Chapter 30

THE NIGHTS WERE GETTING COLD—WITH A WET COLD. The winds seemed to curl down from the mountains, dip into the water and then throw this water at us if we were in smallboats. But the Navy's Frogmen continued working away, in the water and out of it, helping to clear up mines and everything else.

The main headquarters of these fabulous Frogmen was a destroyer transport with the awkward name of *Diachenko*. Whatever the name means I do not know. But we used to slur over the pronunciation and wish she had been named something different, maybe something simple like Maud or Daisy. But that never happens.

My first introduction to these Frogmen had come in a roundabout way, and was more of a description than an introduction. So many of the landing craft at Wonsan had been damaged by the seas, and were under repair, that one of my roommates, the young Ensign William Naylor, was really on the go all the time at first with the surviving one he operated.



A larger landing craft, weighed down with supplies, had been stranded and partly wrecked off a beach near Wonsan, and so Bill Naylor and his crew would work the cold nights through trying to unload this craft.

"Oh, I don't mind at all," he would say, on returning aboard in the morning, and still shivering. "Oh, I don't mind at all." But it would take him a good fifteen minutes to remove all his layers of clothes. And this was when, while removing his oilskins and the rest of his clothes, was when he first told of the Frogmen who had helped him at night when his own craft had become stranded in the darkness.

"What the demolition crewmen did—when they saw I needed help—what the men did was to wear nothing except trunks maybe, and maybe swimfins. But they jumped in that cold water and swam out and helped us with our lines—just like that they would," said Ensign Naylor of Kansas City.

Bill had a Southern drawl, and, in his oral admiration of the demolition crews, he sometimes would get his tenses mixed. So I never knew for sure how often the Frogmen did help him, whether every night or just occasionally. But despite the cold nights he always seemed to look ahead to meeting these men again and "to hear what they got to tell me about getting lost or stuck among the mines. Oh, their language, even when they're laughing at me and helping, oh their language is somethin' fierce. Oh my."

As for Bill's own boat crew, the same as with all small-boat crews operating in a strange and faraway place, I often think we see young Americans at their finest. For, once away from their mothership, they are on their own so much, and often with their own quick decisions to make, whether right or wrong. The mechanic becomes an engineer with an engineer's responsibilities. And the cox'n becomes a captain, or at least must feel he is one, as away they go to some strange beach or to some distant vessel which they themselves must find from among a lot of other vessels.

Frequently I have tried to list the various articles which dangle around the waists of members of these smallboat crews, but a complete listing is rather hopeless. For new things, or new innovations, seem to be added all the time, and others discarded. Nor do I think that all of the things are exactly necessary, but they do look good and they do add an importance. A dangling string of mighty keys, for instance, which may or may not fit in anything.

The wearing of a sheath-knife is understandable, of course, the same as when worn by fighter-pilots. The pilots do not wear these knives for the purpose of killing anybody, but for a more convenient reason. The reason is the folded rubber life rafts which are strapped to these fighter-pilots and on which they are sitting while in the cockpit.

These life rafts have been known to inflate on their

own accord, and suddenly, the air-pressure bomb accidentally going off while the pilot is flying. The result is not comical, but could be disastrous. A fighter pilot, flying a single-seater, has such little room anyhow that the life raft, on ballooning between him and the stick, knocks him backward and the stick forward. All he can do when this happens is to try to grab his knife and rip the rubber. Hence: the wearing of a knife along with all the rest of his bulging gear. For without this knife, in such an accident, he never could reach the stick again.

The knives so often worn by these smallboat boys varied from a jackknife fastened by a string to other knives almost as elaborate in length as a Civil War saber, and the boys forever seemed to be pulling out these knives from their leather sheaths, sharpening or testing the blades, and then returning them. We could not help but wonder if all these trips of the blades, so to speak, were always necessary.

Yet the same as with the Frogman, our Navy of today would not be the Navy it is without these unsung smallboat boys. When the seas suddenly start pitching too high for the smallboats to return back alongside without danger of being smashed—or else smashing something—the smallboats usually stay off awaiting a better moment to come alongside. The wind may be cold and the spray may be cold, but during such times the smallboat boys appear almost majestic as they bump up and down in their own separated little world, and maybe they know it.

\* \* \*

(Not to get too much ahead of my story—for I must finish it soon—but no experience or training is ever really wasted, and even though ports may be lost. For these same skilled boys of the smallboats, along with the men of the demolition crews, also had their share afterwards in rescuing the troops from the beach at Hungnam. "A beachhead landing in reverse," the operation was called.

Yet ironically, the same Marine and Army troops we helped land here at Wonsan, for their trek northward up the east coast, were also the identically same troops the Navy later saved by keeping the beach protected by a continuous barrage from all the Navy guns at sea. And with the smallboat boys in on it too by running their errands all over the place during the reloading.)

\* \* \*

Once I asked one of the young cox'ns if he would like another kind of job.

While he was thinking about the answer—or at least I presumed he was thinking about the answer—he pulled out his sheath-knife absently, looked at it, then put it back.

"Well, Pete," I started all over, "don't you get tired of running a smallboat all the time?"

"Who? Me?" he answered.

So we had to let it go at that.

## Chapter 31

AS THERE NEVER IS AN ACTUAL CONCLUSION TO ANYTHING—to anything in life at all—there can be no definite conclusion to these chapters here. Our thoughts and our memories begin with a string of nebulous dots and also taper off that way.

Obviously nobody in a war is expected to know everything, or to see everything, or to be everywhere. Many other vessels and many other people I would like to have mentioned for what they did, and are doing, but I am no historian. For historians do have the jump on the rest of us in this matter: they can wait until some certain episode supposedly is ended, and then they can try to become very thorough about it indeed, in retrospect.

Yet as for the rest of us, our bodies become but little packages of memories of the things which have photographed themselves upon us individually as we have gone along, and that is about all we can do about it because we do not see the supposed end. For there is none, and the supposed ends are merely spliced into something else which keeps on going.

For instance, I may have tried to be wisely retrospective myself when ashore at Wonsan. I may have tried to be an historian by taking mental notes of our base being developed there, and how we as Americans are always sure to plant something of America with us as permanent reminders of home. This time the "permanent" reminder was a signpost, made by the Marines out of boxwood, and with arrows pointing:

Santa Ana.....	8500 miles
Los Angeles.....	8446 miles
New York.....	11,500 miles

So there, I thought, is something an historian would use, and so I copied the sign. But to show how some of us positively cannot be historians, the "permanent" sign long before now has been used for Oriental firewood, I suppose.

In a vacant stretch of ground far back of the signpost was something else. Reaching up from the weeds was a rusty playground apparatus for children, and containing a ladder, an iron swing and a chute. They were neglected from lack of use, of course, and could have been falling apart. For no children were around here now, but only bomb craters, weeds, and this playground apparatus sticking up from the weeds.

Yet if this peculiar earth of ours was populated only by children (for we have seen them of all nationalities and

all races, and all kids are the same) we perhaps would have no more wars. We would have plenty of little fist-fights, no doubt, and considerable face-scratching at times, but no earth-raging wars.

Maybe this playground apparatus is still standing at Wonsan, or maybe not. Maybe adults already have torn it down to use in war what was left of the metal.

Or again, maybe all of us the world over should stop growing older once we reach the kid age of six. A chute-the-chutes is more fun than shooting.

\* \* \*

On returning to Tokyo for a short while, and to receive further orders, I was welcomed again by "My Three Little Girls" of the billet. And to think, not so many years ago we had been obliged to drop bombs on their fathers after their fathers in turn had dropped bombs on us.

So here we go again, damn near everywhere, I suppose, and the false breather after Wonsan had been but the prelude. Also, our own little playgrounds at home may get rusty this next time, and be the ones surrounded by weeds.

















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